

# Sight & Sound

THE INTERNATIONAL FILM MAGAZINE

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**PLUS****THE DARDENNES***How they found their style***TABU VS TAVIANIS***The big Berlinale divide***ONCE UPON A  
TIME IN ANATOLIA***Nuri Ceylan's Chekhovian epic***CARL DREYER***Inside the making of 'Ordet'***WERNER HERZOG***goes 'Into the Abyss'***TINY FURNITURE***Lena Dunham's onscreen life*EVERY NEW  
**FILM**  
REVIEWED

SEAN PENN HITS THE ROAD IN SORRENTINO'S

# THIS MUST BE THE PLACE







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**8.30 pm** (followed by Q&A)

Curzon Mayfair London

**The Source**

**8.30 pm** (followed by Q&A)

The Clapham Picture House London



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Sean Penn in Paolo Sorrentino's 'This Must Be the Place'

Next issue  
on sale  
10 April

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**Welcome.** If, like the Eurovision Song Contest, we're allowed to stretch the boundaries of the continent across the Bosphorus, then it's fair to say that this month's issue focuses squarely on European auteurs. Turkey's Nuri Bilge Ceylan (left, and p.28) adds a string to his bow with his take on the police procedural, *Once upon a Time in Anatolia*, while Italy's Paolo Sorrentino (with this month's cover star Sean Penn far left, and p.16) follows in the footsteps of such illustrious compatriots as Visconti and Antonioni by uncovering a new side of a Hollywood icon in *This Must Be the Place*. The Dardenne brothers (p.40) represent Belgium, while two very different old masters – Denmark's Carl Theodor Dreyer (p.36) and the Czech Republic's Jirí Trnka (p.46) – are also honoured. And I report from the Berlin Film Festival (p.24) where, in true Eurovision style, a Portuguese contender lost out to Italian experience. *Douze points!* ♦♦ **Nick James**

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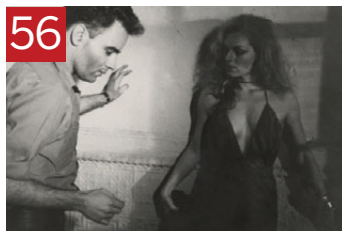


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**AND ONLINE THIS MONTH** The Dardennes video interview | Cyril Tuschi on Khodorkovsky | Suzan Pitt's surrealist animation | Terayama Shuji and more [www.bfi.org.uk/sightandsound](http://www.bfi.org.uk/sightandsound)



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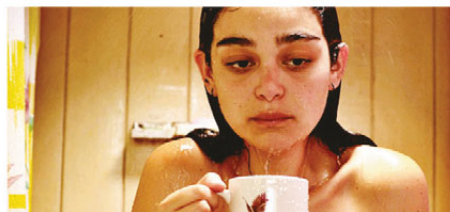


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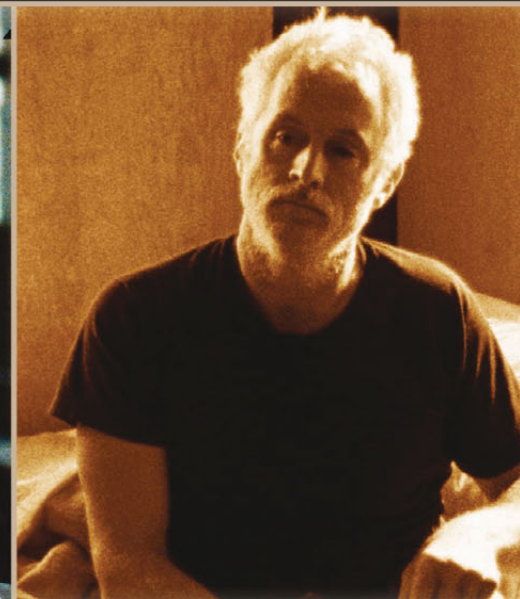
MICHAEL SHANNON



# RETURN



A FILM BY LIZA JOHNSON



SHE CAME HOME FROM THE WAR, BUT SHE DIDN'T LEAVE IT BEHIND.

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# NICK JAMES ELEGY FOR ANALOGUE



For a long time now, when people talk to me about digital publishing – in which *Sight & Sound* will get much more involved in this coming year (watch this space, and don't fear for the print edition) – I have argued that being in

print publishing is like being in radio when television came along: it's not going away, it'll just never again be the default mass medium it once was. By the same token, ever since it has become more obvious that analogue (photochemical) film is being abandoned by the industry at a far greater speed than anticipated, my position has been that film will eventually find its own level of use on a more specialist (and regrettably more expensive) basis. For the time being, cinematographers in Hollywood are keeping alive the originating of movie imagery on 35mm film, even if it then gets digitised immediately post-production begins.

Whether or not a digital-capture system comes along that will satisfy all the current transitional generation of cinematographers, unless we persuade younger people that there's something about analogue that's crucial to investigate and preserve, the next generation of people behind the camera will probably kill off film as an affordable medium. One person who hopes that's unthinkable is the Berlin-based British artist Tacita Dean. There's no article I've read that's more eloquent on the subject of the importance of retaining photochemical film as a creative option for filmmakers and artists than her essay in the catalogue for *Film* – the huge-scale work that has occupied Tate Modern's turbine hall for five months until 11 March.

In February Dean invited a swathe of film-industry people to the Tate to hear her plea for film's survival. Her central suggestion is that photochemical film and its processes be declared a 'World Heritage Site', since the medium is the repository of so much human memory. She then said, however, that she was passing on the baton of this fight to those present.

There's no doubt that digital and analogue are essentially different processes that produce essentially different results; and to my mind, in perfect circumstances, analogue remains superior. What makes digital the chosen form for the industry, however, is simple: it's cheaper, more convenient and probably more consistent in quality. Dean's arguments against this ease of use are potent in artistic terms but moot when it comes

to the industrial needs of a mass-market system.

This column has argued in the past, as does Dean now, that the best of all possible worlds would be the continuing survival of both options. For that to continue to happen, the enthusiasm for analogue film and the fast-evaporating skills associated with it will have to be passed on to the next generation of artists and filmmakers (and, of course, still photographers), as a matter of great urgency. Only then might we see a gradual resurgence of film to match that of vinyl records, finding its own successful commercial level – albeit at a lower level than before.

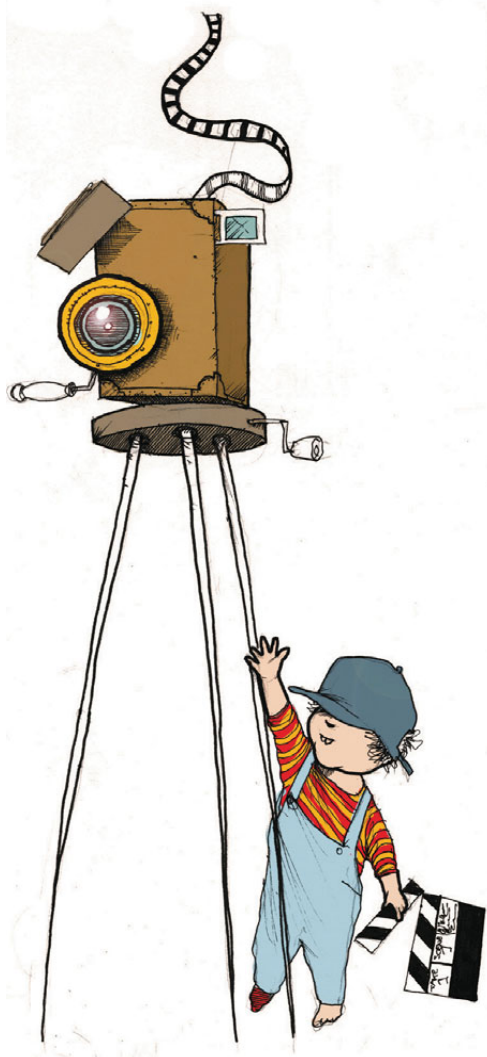
One indication that the time may be ripe for an analogue resistance to gain extra gravitational force is the reaching-out to older techniques of filmmaking that's evident in so many recent films of note, from the mainstream Oscar hopefuls (I'm writing this before the results are announced) *The Artist* (a pastiche silent comedy) and *Hugo* (a depiction of cinema magic in the silent era of Georges Méliès), to more abstruse offerings on

**For the survival to happen, the enthusiasm for analogue film will have to be passed on to the next generation of artists and filmmakers**

the festival circuit such as Portuguese director Miguel Gomes's Berlin prize-winner *Tabu* (see p.24), Filipino director Raya Martin's tribute to his country's early cinema, *Independencia*, and the tribute elements in Apichatpong Weerasethakul's *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives*.

Of course, the irony is that so much of this possibly nostalgic activity depends on digital techniques – certainly in the case of *The Artist* and *Hugo*. This looking-back might not in the end be about the technology per se, but about the levels of invention that technological limitations required of artists and filmmakers. Again Dean is eloquent about this: "One attribute of film that most are happy to lose is its burdensome physicality, but for me that is precisely what is important. I am wedded to the metronome beat of the spool as it turns. I count time in my films from the clicking as the core collects the film. The time it takes to implement an idea... is the time of deep thought, concentration and consideration. I need that material resistance to my ideas and this is what I'm most afraid of losing."

In terms of time and contemplation maybe we're all losing something we'll end up missing in the long run.



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# Jason and the Argonauts <sup>PG\*</sup>

## + Panel Discussion

To mark the publication of Ray Harryhausen's *Fantasy Scrapbook*, animation experts **Nick Park**, **Mark Waring** and **Tony Dalton** join us in conversation after a rare screening of this special effects masterpiece.

26 Apr 2012



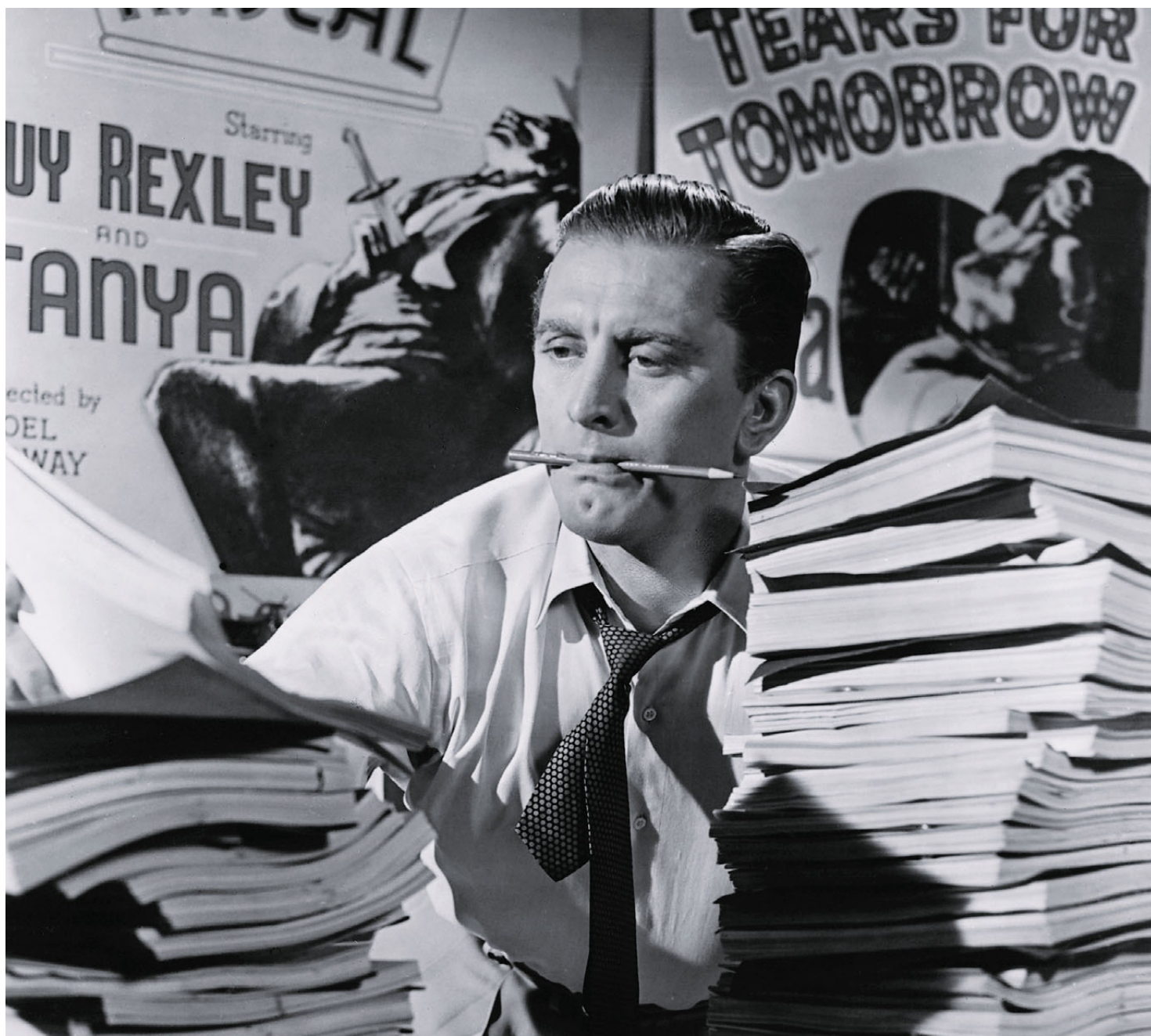
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## THE BIGGER PICTURE



## Rules of the game

"Don't worry. Some of the best movies are made by people working together who hate each other's guts." So says Kirk Douglas as the once-feared, now down-on-his-luck producer Jonathan Shields (above) in 'The Bad and the Beautiful' (1952), a definitive peek behind the Hollywood scenes by the great studio director Vincente Minnelli (right). And Shields should know, having burned his bridges with the very people he now calls on to help him make his comeback picture –

screenwriter James Lee Bartlow (Dick Powell), director Fred Amiel (Barry Sullivan) and movie star Georgia Lorrison (Lana Turner). With brilliant use of flashbacks, Minnelli's film chronicles how Shields alienated each of them, with mischievous allusions to many real-life Hollywood figures along the way – Selznick, Welles, Hitchcock and Judy Garland among them. The film returns to UK cinemas on 20 April, and screens as part of a Minnelli season running till the end of May at BFI Southbank, London.





# Polish homecoming

From 'In Darkness' to 'The Wire', Agnieszka Holland tells it like it is. By **Roger Clarke**

Agnieszka Holland has been away making television in the USA – very high-quality television – but the Holocaust has once again brought her back to her native Poland. *In Darkness* tells the story of Leopold Socha, a sewer worker in German-occupied Lvov in 1943 who stumbles on a group of Jewish people hiding in the pipes and overflows honeycombed beneath the streets. For 14 months Socha quite coolly takes their money, but when the money runs out he finds himself – in a kind of daze – buying them food out of his own pocket. Both the redemptive arc of Socha's journey into moral responsibility and the harrowing story of these refugees from the Final Solution have made the film a popular choice with the Academy, who nominated it for the Best Foreign Language Film category this year. It's Holland's second Oscar nomination – back in 1992 she got a screenwriting nod for another World War II story, *Europa Europa* (Hitlerjunge Salomon).

Born in Warsaw in 1948, Holland graduated from film school in Prague in 1971. Her first feature *Provincial Actors* (Aktorzy prowincjonalni, 1978), considered a keynote of Poland's so-called 'Cinema of Moral Disquiet', won a prize at Cannes in 1980. A year later, she emigrated to France and settled into a successful run of Euro productions, including *Olivier, Olivier* (1992) and *Total Eclipse* (1995), which gave a pre-*Titanic* Leonardo DiCaprio the central role of symbolist poet Arthur Rimbaud.

Holland collaborated with her friend and fellow exile Krzysztof Kieslowski on screenplays for his acclaimed *Three Colours* trilogy, but it was her Hollywood versions of two literary classics – *The Secret Garden* (1993) and *Washington Square* (1997) – that caught the eye of the Americans. Before long she was a favourite with HBO, directing key episodes in the third, fourth and fifth series of *The Wire* (2004-8). Her association with *Wire* creator David Simon continued on his subsequent New Orleans-set series *Treme* (2010-).

For a director usually thought of as 'arthouse', her very successful US TV career might seem strange – until you notice that she originally started out in TV in Poland back in 1975. In 2007 she returned to Polish TV to direct episodes of the political drama *Ekipa*, alongside her director daughter Katarzyna Adamik. Holland is



**'Sometimes I expressed my opinions in a way that American directors don't do. In America they are very hierarchic'**

spending more time in Poland these days "for family reasons", she says during our interview, which takes place just yards from where Rimbaud and Verlaine used to carouse in Old Compton Street, Soho.

She seems to have reached a new accommodation with the Polish audience, she tells me: "[The Polish audience] was good under Communism, but after the 90s it became more stupid and I said it was the stupidest audience in Europe." She thinks a new, younger generation is more in tune with her interests – wholly fed up, in other words, with all the "plastic bullshit".

She's not shy about airing her views. "Sometimes maybe I expressed my opinions in a way that American directors don't do," she admits. "In America they are very hierarchic. With David Simon it happened several times, and he wasn't used to it. But then he asked me to do the pilot of *Treme*."

When not working in America, her films have shown a recurring preoccupation with the Nazi era: in addition to *Europa Europa*, she made *Angry Harvest* (Bittere Ernte, 1985) and wrote the screenplays for Andrzej Wajda's *A Love in Germany* (Eine Liebe in Deutschland, 1983) and *Korczak* (1990). There were other unmade Holocaust-related projects too,



The cold light of day: 'In Darkness'

including one about a Jewish member of the Polish government in exile in London during World War II, who committed suicide as a act of public protest to "try to wake the Allies up" to the reality of the camps. When first approached by *In Darkness* screenwriter David F. Shamoon, she turned him down twice, thinking she'd finally left the subject behind. But he was so persistent that she relented in the end.

"As a child I heard so many stories about the Ghetto and read so much about it, that at one point I felt I'd been there," Holland recalls. Her Jewish father saw much of his family killed by the Nazis, while her mother – active in the Polish underground – helped several Jewish refugees survive, thus earning herself the honorific 'righteous among the nations' from the State of Israel.

With *In Darkness* under her belt, Holland's now off to do more TV. Though HBO turned down a proposal of hers on the scandals of the Catholic church (she's not 'anti' by any means, having embraced Catholicism as a girl in defiance of her atheist parents), she's revisiting her radical youth in a series for Czech HBO about a self-immolating student in 1969.

That was the Prague of her film-student days. At that age she identified with Rimbaud. "Now I have become Verlaine," the 63-year-old sighs, "afraid of everything and sentimental." In person, however, she seems entirely fearless, and not sentimental at all. With admirable candour, she admits she's even voted for herself in the Oscars. "If you want to win, you vote for yourself, right?"

■ 'In Darkness' is released on 16 March, and is reviewed on page 66

● **Rafi Pitts**, the acclaimed Iranian director of 2010's 'The Hunter', is collaborating with Razvan Radulescu, the Romanian screenwriter of 'The Death of Mr Lazarescu' and Palme d'Or-winner '4 Months, 3 Weeks & 2 Days', on his next feature 'Soy Negro'.

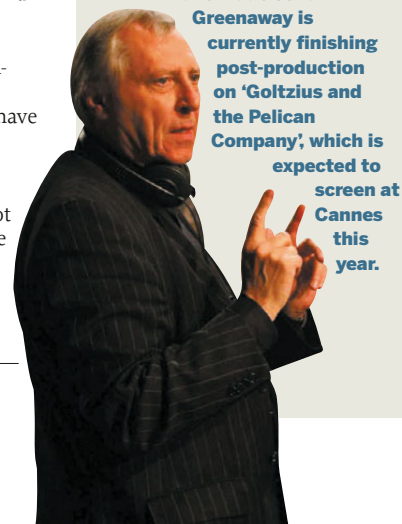
● **Kelly Reichardt** is reportedly hoping to follow 'Meek's Cutoff' with 'Night Moves' (no relation to Arthur Penn's 1975 film), a story about three environmentalists who pot to blow up a dam. Peter Sarsgaard and Paul Dano are tentatively attached.

● **Carlos Saura**, the veteran Spanish director, has signed up Antonio Banderas to play Pablo Picasso in '33 Dias', a film about the creation of the Spanish artist's monumental anti-war painting 'Guernica'. The title refers to the 33 days Picasso spent working on the painting in 1937, commemorating the Luftwaffe's bombing of a Spanish town at Franco's behest during the Civil War. Shooting is due to start this summer.

● **Michael Winterbottom** has now confirmed that Steve Coogan – who previously played Factory Records boss Tony Wilson for him in '24 Hour Party People' – will be starring in his biopic of Soho porn magnate Paul Raymond, now titled 'The King of Soho' and set to go ahead. 'Nowhere Boy' screenwriter Matt Greenhalgh has written the script. Co-starring Anna Friel and Imogen Poots, it's due to start filming in London soon.

● **Peter Greenaway** (below) is preparing to follow in the aristocratic footsteps of Luchino Visconti by adapting Thomas Mann's 'Death in Venice'. Greenaway's version is reportedly going to be titled 'Food for Love'. According to producer Kees Kasander, "It's partly shot in Venice. Most will be shot in a studio. This film is coming closer to 'The Cook, The Thief, His Wife & Her Lover' than any films we have made so far."

Greenaway is currently finishing post-production on 'Goltzius and the Pelican Company', which is expected to screen at Cannes this year.





# Information blackout

*Closed by the Coalition government, the COI will be sorely missed, says Sue Woods*

This month marks the passing of one of the least acknowledged but most significant contributors to UK film culture. On 31 March, after more than 65 years, the doors will close at the Central Office of Information, the government's PR, marketing and communications service.

The COI is best known for producing public-information films on health and welfare issues, many of which have entered the national consciousness. Who could forget the late-1980s Aids-awareness campaign with Nicolas Roeg's nightmarishly effective TV ads *Iceberg* and *Monolith*? Or the 1970s road-safety mantras of the Green Cross Code man, Dave Prowse – better known as the man who played Darth Vader? Recently, many of those films have found a new audience through the BFI's themed DVD collections of the COI's film output, which have proved to be hugely popular.

Cherished as these films are, there's more to the COI than public-information shorts. Created as a peacetime successor to the Ministry of Information (MOI), the COI has been serving the government's information and communications needs since 1946. The COI Films

Division and the Crown Film Unit (its in-house production body until 1952) boast a proud film lineage, tracing back via the pre-war GPO Film Unit to John Grierson and the 1930s Documentary Film Movement. The COI produced tens of thousands of documentaries, shorts, animations and TV ads, and offered a training ground for such luminaries of British cinema as Peter Greenaway, Lindsay Anderson and Hugh Hudson.

So what went wrong? When the Coalition government came to power in May 2010 it announced an immediate freeze on all public-sector marketing and advertising, except for 'essential' campaigns. A review of the role of the COI in government communications followed, with a proposal that the COI be axed and replaced by a 'Government Communications Centre' based within the Cabinet Office. Although these proposals were greeted with alarm, not least by the several hundred COI staff at risk of redundancy, there was a pragmatic acceptance that the COI was due for restructuring.

By April 2011 the Department of Health, which had suffered greatly under Whitehall's marketing and advertising freeze, had already published a report called 'Changing Behaviour, Improving Outcomes', which outlined the negative impact of budget cuts on national-health-



'Monolith': Nicolas Roeg's COI campaign

improvement programmes. Examples included an 80 per cent reduction in the number of people joining Change4Life, a healthier-living campaign produced through COI and supported by TV ads.

It came as a complete surprise, however, when in June 2011 Cabinet Office Minister Francis Maude confirmed the closure of the COI and rejected all proposals to replace it. The reaction to this decision from most of the PR, marketing and advertising sectors was one of shock and regret. Mourning COI's demise most, however, are the visual-communications industry: individual filmmakers and production companies whose prize-winning

work demonstrates both their own inventiveness and technical prowess, and that of COI staff. As Pete Stevenson, the creative director of award-winning filmmakers The Edge Picture Company, puts it: "We all understand that, for now, government spending on communication is frozen. But one day, someone in government will realise that they need to commission something extraordinary to save lives, change perceptions... They'll claw their way to getting a budget together. And then they'll find more barriers in their way to spending that money well – to getting communication that works – than before the government took a slash-and-burn approach."

The COI may be gone, but its legacy remains. Plans are afoot for its historic library and archive to transfer to the BFI and be made publicly available as part of the nation's film heritage. For Britain's visual-communications specialists, however, the future is less certain. Hopes are pinned on the Olympics and the Queen's Jubilee celebrations, as an opportunity to demonstrate to government the talent on offer. We wish them well.

■ Volumes 1-6 of 'The COI Collection' are available now on BFI DVD. Volume 7, 'The Queen on Tour', is available from 14 May

## THE NUMBERS

# Awards rewards

*How are this year's Oscar contenders faring at the box office, asks Charles Gant*

This year, prestige titles have had the major awards races to themselves. At the Oscars, for example, there have been no equivalents to the previous year's Best Picture blockbuster nominees *Toy Story 3* and *Inception*, unless you count pricey, family-skewing titles *War Horse* and *Hugo*, from heavy hitters Steven Spielberg and Martin Scorsese.

This has all been good news for the nation's independent cinema bookers, who have had a rich array of awards contenders to choose from. "It's been very, very good," says Clare Binns, director of programming and acquisitions at Picturehouse, whose sites have done well with *The Artist*,

*The Descendants* and *War Horse* – all Best Picture Oscar nominees – but also with *Shame*, a Bafta nominee for Michael Fassbender.

But while independent cinemas have done well with this year's awards movies, the same cannot be said of multiplex chains. *War Horse* aside, the Oscar-nominated titles simply haven't crossed over in a meaningful way. Last time around, in addition to mainstream mega-hits *Toy Story 3* and *Inception*, prestige contenders *The King's Speech* (£45.7m), *Black Swan* (£16.2m), *The Social Network* (£10.7m), *True Grit* (£8.5m), *127 Hours* (£7.8m) and *The Fighter* (£6.3m) all connected with broader audiences. At time of going to press, none of this year's Best Picture Oscar nominees had exceeded £7 million in the UK, apart from *War Horse*. *The Iron Lady*, a contender for Best

Actress, had reached £9.3 million.

"You can't expect another *King's Speech*," says Binns, "but overall the films this year just haven't been as broadly appealing. *Black Swan* and *The Fighter* worked at the sexy end of the mainstream, and where are the equivalents in 2012? *Shame* has been great for us, but it's too tough for broader multiplex audiences; success has been fairly London-based."

Inevitably, there have been casualties. *J. Edgar* (£1.0m at press time) and *Coriolanus* (£551,000) suffered from being awards-race contenders with no actual nominations, and *Like Crazy*, a Sundance darling starring Felicity Jones and Anton Yelchin, crashed and burned. Opening on a wildly optimistic 104 screens, it had dwindled to three sites by its fourth weekend, with a total gross of

## 2012 Best Picture Oscar nominees at UK box office

Film	Gross
War Horse	£17.68m
The Descendants	£6.95m
The Artist	£6.81m
Hugo	£5.33m
The Help	£4.25m
Midnight in Paris	£2.78m
The Tree of Life	£1.73m
Moneyball	£0.83m
Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close	£0.35m

\*All grosses to February 19

£170,000. Jason Reitman's *Young Adult* (£363,000) was a title "we were desperate to play," says Binns, but "it was so difficult for us to take it on, given the other stuff out there. Where we could fit it in, it did well. It's very frustrating. It's one of those films you always get in the Bafta/Oscar window, that frankly deserves better."



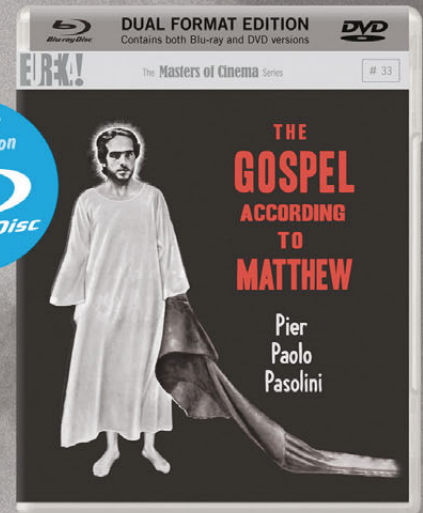
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# Out of the depths

**Mark Le Fanu** pays tribute to 1956's *Gervaise*, a great example of Zola on film – and of the work of its neglected director, René Clément

Emile Zola has been well served by the cinema, not merely in the number of adaptations that have been made from his work, but also in their quality. Back in the silent epoch there was Albert Capellani's titanic two-and-a-half-hour version of *Germinal* (1913), along with two further masterworks: André Antoine's beautiful adaptation of *La Terre* (1921) and Marcel L'Herbier's of *L'Argent* (1928). Renoir adapted Zola twice (*Nana*, 1926, and *La Bête humaine*, 1938), while the 1950s gave us Marcel Carné's powerful *Thérèse Raquin* (1953, with Simone Signoret) and Fritz Lang's *Bête humaine* remake *Human Desire* (1954). More recently *Germinal* has been done again, quite impressively (by Claude Berri, 1993), and doubtless there are others I haven't come across.

René Clément's *Gervaise*, an adaptation of the 1877 novel *L'Assommoir*, was released in 1956. It was briefly available on Region 1 DVD as part of the Janus Films' Essential Art House collection, but is otherwise unavailable. The original book was part of the celebrated Rougon-Macquart series, in which Zola followed the fortunes of a family whose inability to prosper in the world is linked to the hereditary curse of alcoholism (*L'assommoir* itself means cheap drinking den). Clément's adaptation is a masterpiece – as good an example as one can get of the 'tradition of quality' that exemplified post-war French cinema before it was attacked (and effectively destroyed) by the hostility of the *nouvelle vague*.

Zola's story centres on a "belle Parisienne", Gervaise – a washer-girl with a limp, played by the beautiful Maria Schell. As the tale opens she is in love with handsome wastrel Lantier (Armand Mestral) who, having bedded her, promptly deserts her. Humiliated by this public rejection, Gervaise presses ahead with her aim to open a little laundry shop of her own, aided in this ambition by a new man in her life, a roofer named Coupeau (François Périer). But Coupeau, initially sound and solid, is injured in a fall and, when his injuries fail to heal, takes spectacularly to the bottle. This is a cue for Lantier to move back into the household, first as a lodger and finally – as the twists of fate sap our heroine's soul – as master



Clean sheets: Maria Schell as washerwoman Gervaise, with François Périer as Coupeau

and conqueror. The film ends with the establishment in financial ruin, Gervaise a penniless alcoholic and her barely teenage daughter Nana about to set off on the street to become a prostitute.

The tale, as such, couldn't be more pessimistic. And yet a summary doesn't communicate at all the flavour of this work of art, which is imbued with a sort of perverse gaiety or even nobility. Terrible things happen to Gervaise, yet without essentially corrupting her: she remains to the end a sweet moral being. Incarnated in Maria Schell's vibrant and beautiful performance, the qualities that seem to define her most are kindness and optimism. In contrast to the scenes where Gervaise is victimised, there are other, equally important scenes where we see her take charge of her life: organising and running the laundry; coping lovingly with her husband's long illness; maintaining her dignity, finally, in the face of her evil star Lantier.

In keeping with the pitiless realism of Zola's original, Clément's *Gervaise* is spiritually bold. French cinema has

## It has a physical sparkle and a pervasive sensual undercurrent

a reputation for dealing with sexual matters in a candid, non-prurient manner, and *Gervaise* is in this sense a wholly 'grown-up' movie adaptation, availing itself of freedoms from censorship that weren't on offer for American or British filmmakers at the time. There's a wonderful scene when Gervaise invites friends from the neighbourhood back to her home for a celebration dinner. A roast goose is produced and carved at the table and, while the carver is pouring juice out of the bird onto the gravy dish, one of the revellers is overheard to exclaim: "I wish my wife would piss in my mouth like that!" A proletarian robustness is everywhere in evidence, most famously in another, earlier scene showing Gervaise, victor in a titanic laundry-

room cat-fight, pulling down her opponent's drawers and slipping her naked bottom in front of the assembled washerwomen.

The dialogue throughout the movie is dark, sardonic and pithily to the point. At the party sequence there's a pregnant confrontation in the kitchen, during which Gervaise reveals her attraction for the first time to an upright admirer. "Kiss me!" she begs him tipsily. "You've had too much to drink," the man replies – not without kindness, and at any event tempted. "So have you," Gervaise counters in sweet desperation. "That's why we should do it!" – at which point she hurls herself into his arms. Without ever making a big deal of it, Clément's film has a physical sparkle and a pervasive sensual undercurrent.

The acting is excellent right across the board. Hitchcock famously said that, in filmmaking, every stitch in the tapestry has to count. The minor characters in *Gervaise* are just as meticulously shaded as the principals: in the large party scenes, for example (the goose supper, the fight in the laundry, a visit to the Louvre) you're made to feel that everyone in frame has a backstory. The responsibility for such effortlessly authentic evocation is primarily the director's, but it helps in this case that the film was written by Jean Aurenche, one of the finest scenarists of the day (he worked for many years with Claude Autant-Lara and, later in his career, with Bertrand Tavernier). Credit too must be given to production designer Paul Bertrand for his beautifully detailed sets, both interior and exterior – which somehow give the impression of being genuine locations – and to the lovely, atmospheric black-and-white photography of Robert Juillard.

*Gervaise* was Clément's 20th film. He was always an eclectic filmmaker with a palette that ranged from classy thrillers like the Patricia Highsmith adaptation *Plein soleil* (1960) to international blockbusters like *Is Paris Burning?* (1966), not forgetting the two strikingly contrasted films that put him on the map: *La Bataille du rail* (1946) and that exquisite exploration of childhood, *Forbidden Games* (*Les Jeux interdits*, 1952). Yet despite these undoubted hits among a roster of 30 movies, Clément has never ridden high in the auteurist pantheon. What does or doesn't make an auteur is always a complicated business. But the Criterion edition of *Forbidden Games* resurrects two fascinating interviews with Clément in person, in which he comes across as a man with a genuine inner life: a thinker, an artist and a poet.

## What the papers said



"René Clément has achieved a tremendous tour-de-force of literal realism. In the intimate care for every detail of streets and clothing and people, he has exactly recreated the Parisian low-life of the Second Empire... The acting is as precise and as minutely

observed. Périer's performance as Coupeau, above all, is flawless... But something is missing; and we must turn back to Zola to find just what it is... The observed surface of reality provided only one part of Zola's work; its vitality lay in the coarse, vigorous poetic imagination which animated it, and which is lacking in 'Gervaise.' David Robinson, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, January 1957



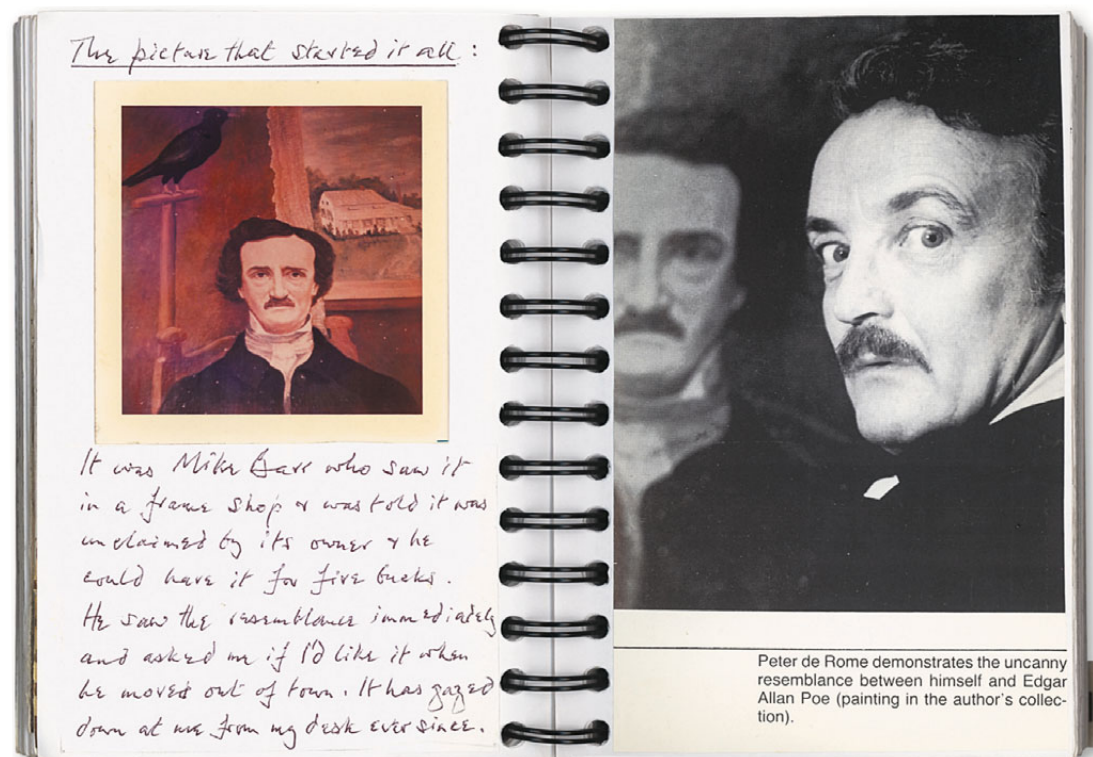
# Come out and play

*This month's London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival unearths the unsung underground legacy of Peter de Rome. By Ryan Powell*

Peter de Rome's first foray into film was, in the truest sense of the word, experimental. Deciding in the mid-1960s to test just how alert his neighbourhood film developer would prove when presented with questionable material, he shot some brief film of himself in his Manhattan apartment, posing nude. Disguised with innocuous material at either end of the film strip, the reel was sent off, and de Rome waited to see what would happen. When his film, somewhat surprisingly, was returned to him intact and without any problems, he started expanding his horizons.

Over the next several years de Rome, camera in hand, wound his way through subways, apartments and art studios from London and New York to Malaga. Incorporating a combination of pick-ups, lovers and friends into an eclectic array of short-film projects, all shot on super 8, he merged documentary and fiction, honing a distinctive style that united the sentimentality of home movies with the direct candour of the sex film. Along with filmmakers such as James Bidgood, Fred Halsted and Pat Rocco, he pioneered a new kind of cinema where sexual encounter and social endeavour came together in new and unlikely ways.

Born in France and raised in England, de Rome began cultivating his sexual and romantic life among



His dark materials: pages from the journals of underground filmmaker Peter de Rome, right

comrades in the RAF during World War II. Later he moved to the United States, enticed by the offer of a job working for producer David O. Selznick; once in America, he became deeply involved in civil-rights activism. While a Hollywood career never panned out, the rise of the hardcore film industry in the last years of the 1960s offered de Rome an alternative system through which his films could be funded and distributed, leading to the release in 1973 of *The Erotic Films of Peter de Rome*, a compilation of shorts he had been shooting since the late 60s.

Blurring boundaries between porn, art film and Hollywood narrative conventions, his films map out a territory for the viewer in which a wide variety of social relations are mobilised through the utopianism of a late-60s/early-70s sexual culture founded on a philosophy of creative enterprise and off-the-cuff invention. De Rome's films suggest a world where everyday life is a richly infused terrain of erotic possibility.

*Daydreams from a Crosstown Bus* takes viewers into the unfolding of one man's daydream. Sparked by the sight of a younger man spotted from the bus window, the film plays out the man's fantasy for viewers, following the two men as they stroll the sunny streets and parks of Manhattan before finding their way to the living-room floor of a low-lit

## De Rome began cultivating his sexual life among his RAF comrades

apartment for an afternoon of fluid, reciprocal sexual engagement.

*Double Exposure*, shot on Fire Island, has echoes of the psycho-symbolism of much post-war avant-garde cinema, recalling the use of domestic space as a metaphor for psychic states in the work of filmmakers such as Kenneth Anger, Maya Deren and Gregory Markopoulos. Like Deren's *Meshes of the Afternoon*, *Double Exposure* follows the protagonist as he wanders through a house, only to come into an erotic confrontation with his own double. There's a strong sense of place in de Rome's films, which make a variety of location-specific erotic encounters seem a casual consequence of environment – from a sexual adventure between two male passengers in a subway car in *Underground* to the “botanical turn-on”, as de Rome described it, experienced by a young man as he undertakes an auto-erotic journey through London's Kew Gardens in *Green Thoughts*.

This month sees the release of *The Erotic Films of Peter de Rome* on BFI DVD, as well as a retrospective of his

films as part of London's Lesbian and Gay Film Festival, offering new viewers a chance to experience these seldom-seen films. Both as cinematic rarity and document of radical social change, de Rome's work affords us an occasion to revisit a moment when sex, politics and culture were taken up by cinema in ways arguably not seen since.

In many ways de Rome's work could be seen as a progenitor of current media projects in which gay male self-representation is fostered through home-video technology – from Jonathan Caouette's feature-length diary *Tarnation* (2004) to the recent proliferation of made-for-YouTube coming-out videos. Yet there's something different at work here that comes from de Rome's devotion to using cinema as a way not only to put his life to film, but to bring people together – directing cinema to the construction of new social worlds on screen and off. As so much queer output today invites us into the confessional space of bedroom production, de Rome's films are a refreshing reminder of how important it is to come out and play.

■ *'The Erotic Films of Peter de Rome'* are released on BFI DVD on 26 March, and screen – alongside *Fragments: The Incomplete Films of Peter de Rome* – at the London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival, BFI Southbank on 30 March



'Daydreams from a Crosstown Bus'



'Double Exposure'



# Bingham Ray 1954–2012

**Mike Leigh** pays tribute to the late stalwart of the indie scene, who helped launch the British director's films in the US

A dark shadow was cast over the Sundance Film Festival in January. That most radical and independent of American independent movie folk, Bingham Ray, suffered two strokes at the festival, and died in a nearby Utah hospital at the age of 57.

The shockwaves were felt by all of us in the independent film community around the world. The memorial gatherings that were held almost immediately – at Sundance itself, in New York, at the Berlinale and elsewhere – were all both profoundly sad and utterly hilarious.

It is tragic that we have lost the most uncompromising and intelligent of fighters for the cause of truth, integrity and unfettered originality in cinema; but we have also been robbed of one of the most outrageously funny men you could ever meet.

Programmer, exhibitor, distributor, producer and studio executive, Bingham was totally committed to enabling original voices to be heard without interference – and audiences to have genuine access to them.

In his lifelong execution of this crusade, he was skilful, combative, deeply serious and highly successful. But to know him was to laugh uncontrollably from dawn to dusk – and all night too, invariably, with much lubrication.

From his baseball cap, worn back to front, and his signature short pants (sporting even at Berlin each February) to his side-splitting party-piece rendering of 'Lydia, the Tattooed Lady', his anarchic naughtiness was endearing and irresistible. But what Bingham Ray didn't know about movies wasn't worth knowing. His knowledge was encyclopedic, and by no means limited to the American mainstream. He really knew his world cinema. And his inexhaustible capacity to describe an entire film, scene by scene, could even – if you were lucky – include a detailed celebration of one of your own films. Yet he was never, ever boring.

After attending Simpson College, Iowa, where his Theatre Arts course included an appearance in *The Mousetrap*, he soon gravitated to New York City, where he became the programmer and manager of the Bleeker Street Cinema in Greenwich Village.

He then worked in marketing and distribution for several companies,



GETTY IMAGES (3)

**Indie crusader:** Ray helped launch a range of independent films in the US market

including Avenue, and was responsible for promoting cutting-edge films by Héctor Babenco, Bruno Barreto, Alan Rudolph, Alex Cox, Stephen Frears, Donna Deitch, Robert Townsend, Spike Lee, Jim Jarmusch, Gus Van Sant, Jane Campion and Terence Davies.

In 1990 he teamed up with Jeff Lipsky to launch their own independent distribution company, October Films. Initially operating out of Jeff's Los Angeles garage, they were very keen to kick off with my film *Life*

*Is Sweet*. However, as they were not sufficiently funded, my late producer Simon Channing Williams found them some UK backing, enabling them to release the film in 1991.

Thus began a great working and personal relationship. From the outset it was clear that theirs was a hands-on kind of approach such as we had never met before. Nor would we thereafter; what other distributor would cross the Atlantic specifically to stand at the back of London screenings in

order to get the hang of how a film worked with an audience?

After the success of *Life Is Sweet* they moved to New York, where Bingham's heart lay, and where they progressed from strength to strength. Lipsky soon left to direct, and Bingham was joined by John Schmidt and others. In those successful October years, Bingham worked with, among others, David Lynch, Lars von Trier, Michael Moore and Jafar Panahi. He got us five Oscar nominations for *Secrets & Lies*, and also released our *Career Girls*.

After the company was bought by Universal, there was a bad moment when the parent company forced him to drop Todd Solondz's wonderful *Happiness*. Bingham was furious. But worse was to come. Some would say that it was a kind of generous naivety on his part that now led to Bingham's shocking ousting from October. It is not appropriate to discuss here the politics of that shameful skulduggery, other than to report that he was stabbed in the back – and many of us know by whom.

Before too long, October ceased to be, and Bingham deeply regretted not having stayed independent. But he did work for United Artists for a few years, during which he released *Bowling for Columbine*, *No Man's Land*, *Personal Velocity*, *Igby Goes Down*, *24 Hour Party People* and *Topsy-Turvy*.

He left, disillusioned but never defeated. After a few wilderness years, despite some success at Sidney Kimmel Entertainment, he at last landed the perfect gig – executive director of the San Francisco Film Society, a job which includes running the legendary film festival in that city.

We were all jubilant. This was the perfect fit for Bingham. He was to embark on a long and joyous journey, in which his passion and enthusiasm for independent cinema would bear richer fruit than ever.

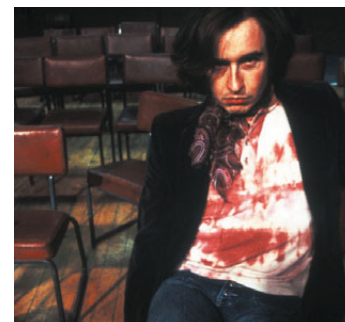
How sad that this is not to be. Instead, we have only his legacy, and the memory of a great innovator, a natural showman, a loving and loyal friend – and an absolute scream.



'Life Is Sweet'



'Secrets & Lies'

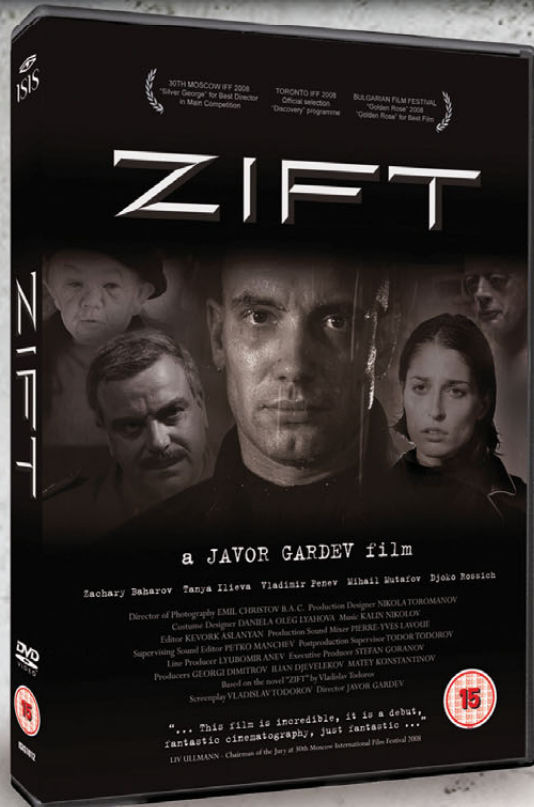


'24 Hour Party People'

BE STILL, POSTERS AND DESIGNS (3)



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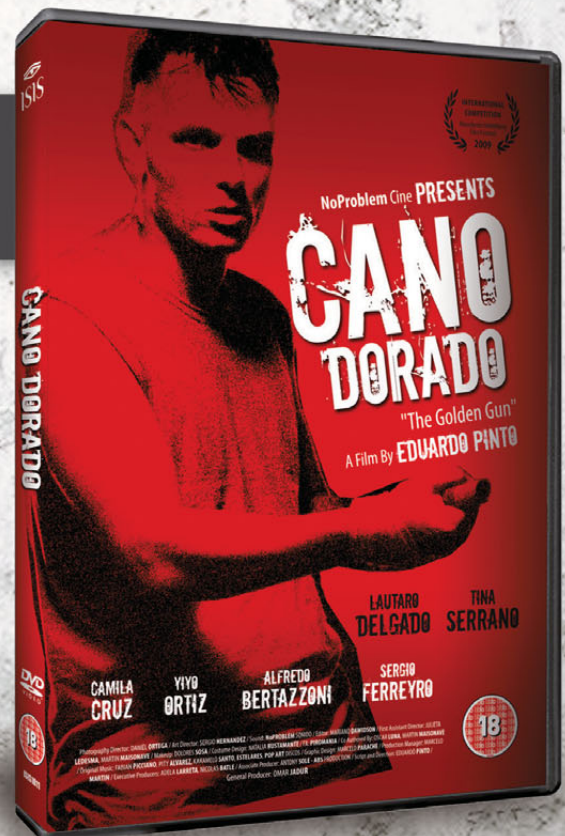


## CANO DORADO



"Raw stuff... Bursting with energy. Very nice indeed" **TWITCH**

"Well worth watching... Beautiful cinematography" **BRING THE NOISE**





# Notes from a small planet

I have spent a lot of time at film festivals over the past year. Mostly it was fun, and along the way it revealed strange generational trends in European cinema.

**Trend one:** Back in the 1960s male Dutch filmmakers such as Paul Verhoeven, Wim Verstappen, Pim de la Parra and, a little later, Ate de Jong put as much raucous sex into their films as the censors would allow. And now this past year no fewer than three young female Dutch directors have made films whose heroines indulge in joyless, often self-harming and always graphic sexual contact – Nanouk Leopold's *Brownian Movement*; Polish-born, Dutch-based Urszula Antoniak's *Code Blue*; and, most recently (in the Berlinale Forum) Sacha Polak's *Hemel*.

**Trend two:** Whereas New German Cinema directors such as Wenders, Fassbinder and Herzog could be relied upon to deal with big themes even when the stories were apparently personal, the emerging generation of directors such as Andreas Dresen, Hans Christian Schmidt and, above all, Christian Petzold are all determined minimalists. Actually, make that miniaturists. They coolly (and, in the case of Petzold's *Barbara*, unveiled in Berlin, masterfully) observe gestures, looks and barely perceptible interactions to build up an astonishingly textured worldview in a very short period of time.

**Trend three:** The continuing rebirth of Russian art cinema, with Sergei Loban's extraordinary *Chapiteau-Show*, which I saw in Rotterdam. A hypnotic three hours and 40 minutes of small-scale drama, surreal interludes and cabaret performance, it reveals more about contemporary Russia than a shelfful of books. Its length is likely to keep it off any commercial buyer's list, and the filmmakers' decision to offer future festivals the first half as a standalone international version strikes me as a mistake (albeit an understandable one). But if even half of it ever comes your way, drop everything and rush to see it: if Aleksandr Sokurov, Andrei Zvyagintsev and Alexei Popogrebsky weren't enough, Loban's film establishes Russia as the country where some of the most interesting cinematic things are happening right now.

But enough about seeing films, which is only half of the festival experience. Going to festivals also means a lot of time standing in line and, as a result, a lot of time to think.

## Mainstream and arthouse are moving further apart. Popcorn cinemas rule, while carrot-cake cinemas are off on a much smaller planet. A moon, perhaps

And you know what? If we hadn't all got so fed up with the word as an automatic suffix to 'Euro', it might be time to talk about a crisis in film.

It's not that there aren't enough being made: there are more than ever, thanks to the relative cheapness of digital technology. And it's not that people aren't going to see films often enough: in 2011, for instance, Russia broke box-office records and France notched up its highest admissions total in years. It's just that more people are going to see fewer films. More plus different equals good. More plus the same equals worrying.

C.P. Snow's 1959 thesis about the "two cultures" of science and humanities has been attached to many areas of human experience over the years, but it pretty much fits the film world these days. There was a time when mainstream and arthouse seemed to be moving together. That was in the early to mid-1990s, when the last recession was over, Sundance was redefining the independent film world and Hollywood was having one of its brief flirtations with independent cinema via its 'classics divisions'. Nowadays, however, mainstream and arthouse are moving further and further apart. Popcorn cinemas rule, while carrot-cake cinemas are off on a different planet. A much smaller planet, too. A moon, perhaps.

As I write this, I have open in front of me *Variety's Berlin Daily Spotlight* for day five of this year's festival (Monday 13 February). On the front page is a classic business story about former-actor-turned-film-sales-legend Mark Damon having his "biggest market ever in Berlin, clocking up more than \$65 million in pre-sales

thanks to projects like *2 Guns* and *Rule #1*. I could deconstruct that sentence, particularly the \$65 million, but you get the gist: Damon has found lots of people ready to put up shitloads of money for two as yet unmade films, one an action pic with Denzel Washington, the other a romcom starring Reese Witherspoon.

Follow me now to page six of the same *Variety* and, on the first page of the reviews section, you will find a generally favourable write-up of Berlin competition entry *Meteora*, an austere story of a monk and a nun falling in love in one of those hilltop monasteries in Greece. Plot-wise, that's pretty much it, although there is also animation, goat skinning and masturbation. The point is, the distance between page one and page six – between the sales business that sustains the festivals and the arthouse filmmaking that is their cultural alibi – has become almost unbridgeable.

No festival will ever programme *2 Guns*; no multiplex-goer will ever see *Meteora*. The only thing that links them is that they are both 'films' (although it is unlikely either will be shown on celluloid) – and that they're both in Berlin (with 'Berlin' being shorthand for a film market on the one hand and a cultural get-together on the other). The words 'film' and 'festival' are straining their meaning so much that we may well have to find new ones soon or see them become meaningless, especially if we continue to insist (as UK cultural policy currently does) that a sustainable film industry must either tend towards the mainstream or be supported by local film festivals that will be created by public demand. ♦♦ Nick Roddick

## EVENTS

● **The Pan-Asia Film Festival** screens films from India, Kazakhstan, Japan, China, Tibet, Iran, Taiwan and South Korea, among them 'A Sense of Home', a compendium of 21 short films made in response to the earthquake and tsunami that devastated Japan in 2011, including work by Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Naomi Kawase and Jia Zhangke. There is a focus on recent Tibetan cinema, plus the UK premiere of 'Mother's Paradise', a collaboration between Mohsen Makhmalbaf and Aktan Arym Kubat, the Kazakh director of 'The Light Thief'. The festival closes with the UK premiere of Wang Xiao-Shuai's 'Flowers'. Various venues, London, 9-18 March. See [www.panasiafilmfestival.org](http://www.panasiafilmfestival.org)

● **Egyptian Spring Season** is a programme of films, music and discussions illustrating contemporary Egyptian culture. The festival opens with Mohamed Diab's 'Cairo 678'. Other films include '18 Days' and 'Cairo Exit'. Showroom Cinema, Sheffield, 8-14 March.

● **The Homeless Film Festival** tours the UK presenting a selection of films relating to homelessness, among them Ken Loach's 'Cathy Come Home', Lenny Abrahamson's 'Adam and Paul' and Marc Singer's 'Dark Days'. Various venues in April, see [www.thehomelessfilmfestival.org](http://www.thehomelessfilmfestival.org)

● **Southend-on-Sea Film Festival** opens with new thriller 'Hard Boiled Sweets', filmed on location in Southend, and closes with 'Lost in Italy', directed by rising star Craig Viveiros and starring festival patron Ray Winstone. There will be over 50 films ranging from classics and world cinema to the latest British independent productions, plus events including a film-poster exhibition and a short-film competition. 30 April to 9 May. [www.southendfilmfestival.com](http://www.southendfilmfestival.com)

● **Birds Eye View's International Women's Day Gala** presents a weekend of films by women filmmakers including 'The Red Virgin', starring Maribel Verdú. Films featuring silent-movie goddess Mary Pickford (left) will also screen, with newly commissioned scores from women composers. BFI Southbank, Southbank Centre and Hackney Picturehouse, London, 8-11 March.





A bold blend of rock-star hip and Holocaust hauntology, Paolo Sorrentino's 'This Must Be the Place' is both an odd-ball vehicle for Sean Penn and the latest expression of the director's baroque visual sensibility. By **Jonathan Romney**

# ON THE ROAD AGAIN

**CHEYENNE AUTUMN**  
Opposite: Sean Penn as Cheyenne. Below, from top: Cheyenne plays fives with Jane (Frances McDormand); Nazi-hunter Mordecai Midler (Judd Hirsch); waitress Rachel (Kerry Condon)



like Paolo Sorrentino's films a lot. And I like his latest, *This Must Be the Place*, a lot too, although it's not my favourite: that would be his second feature *The Consequences of Love* (*Le conseguenze dell'amore*, 2004), which is his most sober and controlled. After that, the Italian director moved into a register of

baroque hyper-agitation that could easily be dismissed as mannerism: the grotesque, neo-commedia dell'arte fantasy *The Family Friend* (*L'amico di famiglia*, 2006), followed by the frenetically cartoonish political satire *Il divo* (2008), about former Italian prime minister Giulio Andreotti.

As I say, I like Sorrentino's films; I'd call him one of my favourite directors, though I can think of more legitimate objections to his work than I can for any other favourite director of mine. So let me first unburden myself of a few arguments that a dispassionate observer might want to level at Sorrentino's new film. His first English-language venture, *This Must Be the Place* is a melancholic road comedy about a retired rock star, Cheyenne (Sean Penn), who leaves his Dublin home and crosses America to track down the Nazi war criminal who once persecuted his father. The first objection is that Sorrentino has wilfully chosen a topic that juxtaposes the absolutely serious and the absolutely trivial: he's created an outlandish and (by the character's own admission) somewhat shallow hero, and brought him face to face with a real historical situation that deserves to be treated with the utmost seriousness: the Holocaust.

The very premise, you can't help thinking, does not compute. And when the film finally shifts into an overtly serious mode that you might consider fitting for its theme [*spoiler alert*]—when Cheyenne finally confronts the old Nazi in a snowy, desolate landscape—the chilly poetry of this sequence might seem a little obviously calculated to offset the previous goofiness. (The seriousness is highlighted too deliberately elsewhere through the use of Arvo Pärt's austere, delicate 'Spiegel im Spiegel', a rare touch of obviousness from a director whose soundtrack awareness is characteristically subtler than this.)

You could also object that *This Must Be the Place* is essentially a one-joke number built around the ludicrous figure of a retired gloom-rocker who now lives a quiet, mundane existence in his mansion. Cheyenne spends his time shopping, dragging his wheeled caddy round the supermarket like a bargain-hunting revenant; wearily fobbing off the approaches of up-and-coming local musos; and hanging out with acolyte Mary, a teenage Goth played by Eve Hewson, daughter of U2's Bono. (The casting is coincidence rather than in-joke, Sorrentino assures me: "The first time I met her I didn't even know she was Bono's daughter. I was the only person in the world who didn't know Bono's surname—I thought Bono was his surname.")

The outwardly fearsome black-clad rocker is in reality a sheepish, world-weary 50-year-old, and the film's central sight gag is Sean Penn made up as a cartoon version of The Cure's front man Robert Smith, with haystack hair, pancake and red lipstick, topped off with a feeble shuffling gait, a quavering, high-pitched voice and giggle (part Michael Jackson, part gangling comic Emo Philips)—plus incongruously genteel pince-nez. He's a cartoon figure who would have been at home in *Stella Street*, the 1990s TV comedy series in which







# I AM THE PASSENGER

Hollywood star meets Italian auteur – Penn and Sorrentino are just the latest in a rich tradition, says **John Wrathall**

From his unlikely beginnings as a stoned surfer dude in 'Fast Times at Ridgemont High' (1982) and Madonna's walker in 'Shanghai Surprise' (1986), Sean Penn has emerged over the last 15 years as the star of choice for US arthouse directors, winning an Oscar with Gus Van Sant and working not once but twice with Terrence Malick. Penn has been cast by a hip European director once before – a bit part in Thomas Vinterberg's 'It's All About Love' (2002); but 'This Must Be the Place' represents his first starring role in that rite of passage for the serious Hollywood actor, the European art movie.

Historically, Italian directors have been particularly open to using American talent in their movies, both because of their national industry's reliance on post-synched dialogue – which meant the distinguished visitor never actually had to learn Italian – and because the facilities of Cinecittà had already put Rome on the map for big international productions. Thus the 1950s gave us Farley Granger in Visconti's 'Senso' (1954), and Broderick Crawford and Richard Basehart in Fellini's 'Il bidone' (1955). But the classic – and triumphant – example of an A-list Hollywood star at the peak of his powers stepping out with an arty Italian auteur was surely 'The Leopard' (1963), in which Visconti succeeded in finding the inner Sicilian aristocrat inside Burt Lancaster, son of a New York-Irish postman. An even more spectacular piece of career reinvention came nine years later, when Marlon Brando bared his soul for Bertolucci in 'Last Tango in Paris' (1972).

What were these Italian directors looking for when they turned to Hollywood stars? More than just commercial clout. Try imagining either of those films starring the great Italian arthouse star of the day, Marcello Mastroianni, and you can see instantly what the Americans brought to the table – sheer oomph. Were there simply no Italian actors rugged enough to carry off such roles?

When Bertolucci made his epic of the class struggle '1900' (1976), he gave the male leads to Gérard Depardieu and Robert De Niro. (And it was a sign of those enlightened times that De Niro, then hot off the unparalleled hat-trick of 'Mean Streets', an Oscar for 'The Godfather Part II', and 'Taxi Driver', should choose to make a four-hour Marxist epic next, in Italian.) Bertolucci rounded out the supporting cast of '1900' with Lancaster (still in imperious 'Leopard' mode) and Donald Sutherland – who then went on the same year to star in 'Fellini's Casanova'. Sutherland's performance in that film was duly hailed by Time Out as "the most astonishing piece of screen acting since Brando's in 'Last Tango'" – which neatly answers the question: what did the Hollywood stars get out of the transaction?

Take Jack Nicholson. Even after back-to-back Oscar nominations for 'The Last Detail' (1973) and 'Chinatown' (1974), he still hadn't found what he was looking for when he headed off into the African desert with Antonioni for 'The Passenger' (1975). (Why is it that it takes Italian directors to send American actors into their Paul



**VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY**  
Italian art movies like 'The Passenger' are where US stars like Jack Nicholson go to find themselves

Bowles-ian, identity-fracturing desert quests? See not only Bertolucci's 1990 'The Sheltering Sky', with John Malkovich and Debra Winger, but also Giuliano Montaldo's forgotten 1989 'Tempo di uccidere', with Nicolas Cage going all the way to the end of the line – via rape, murder and leprosy – in 1930s Ethiopia.)

There's a breathtaking moment in 'The Passenger' when Nicholson and love interest Maria Schneider (from 'Last Tango', of course) are driving an open-topped car down a tree-lined boulevard in Spain. "What are you running away from?" Schneider asks. And Nicholson simply replies: "Turn your back to the front seat." She does, and Antonioni's camera pulls up from the moving car and turns to show us what she's looking at: the road endlessly receding behind them.

No one in Hollywood – not even Polanski – had given him a moment quite as existentially cool and unfathomable as that. Whatever it was that Nicholson discovered on his quest with Antonioni – a stillness, a mystery – it paid off big time. Back in Hollywood the same year, he made 'One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest' – his third (and last) film for a European director, in this case Milos Forman. It's the role that won him his Oscar, of course, but more than that it shows a sheer sense of freedom that wasn't there even a year earlier in 'Chinatown'.

This Italian-American cross-fertilisation was very much a phenomenon of the 1970s – the last time European auteurs really registered on Hollywood radar. Italy's arthouse darlings of the 1980s, the Taviani brothers, may be back this year with their Golden Bear-winner 'Caesar Must Die' (see Berlin report, p.24). But it's hard to imagine Tom Cruise – or even Jeremy Renner – rushing off to make his next film with them.

Not impossible, though. Will Smith may not yet have discovered his inner Sicilian aristocrat, but he does have his own pet Italian director, Gabriele Muccino, who on the strength of the 2003 family drama 'Ricordati di me' was lured to Hollywood to direct the star's more down-to-earth vehicles 'The Pursuit of Happyness' (2006) and 'Seven Pounds' (2008). But Will Smith's Oscar still eludes him. And on this evidence – as Captain Oates might have put it – he may be some time...

Jagger and Richards ran a suburban corner shop, which David Bowie would tend while they were away touring. Penn makes this *outré* character an outright hoot, and the performance is all the more relishable in that this is only the second film in many years (the other being *Milk*) to offer any evidence of the actor having a sense of humour.

You could also object to the film's gratuitous visual excitability, which skips from one strange image to another without much motivation for them, or much overall coherence. But that's a constant of this director's work, which you either accept or not; as Sorrentino once commented, "I always think every film will be my last, so I try to put everything in." There's also the problem of the English dialogue (translated from an Italian script by Sorrentino and Umberto Contarello). By and large, the dialogue doesn't work, peppered as it is with Cheyenne's awkwardly forced musings: "Rock stars shouldn't have kids, because you run the risk that your daughter becomes a wacky stylist." Or: "Ever noticed how nobody does anything any more but everybody does something artistic?" Well, maybe that's just how old Goths talk these days.

Then there's the fact that, while making an American road movie, Sorrentino doesn't seem to be exploring the USA so much as revisiting favourite cinematic landscapes: *Paris, Texas* (betokened by a non-sequitur Harry Dean Stanton cameo), assorted Coen territories (ditto: Frances McDormand as Cheyenne's wife), David Lynch's *The Straight Story*. Overall, the flavour of weird Americana is so overtly 1980s-retro that it's a wonder that Cheyenne doesn't also bump into erstwhile culture tourist Jean Baudrillard out there in the shade of the Joshua tree.

OK, objections duly acknowledged. Still, for me, *This Must Be the Place* transcends its manifest flaws; in fact it constantly surprises, wrong-foots and exhilarates in its unstoppable exuberance and invention. It's joyously cinematic in a way that feels (and this may seem paradoxical, given the contrivance manifest in every shot) spontaneous, even innocent. To use the subtitle of the David Byrne song that gives the film its title, this is Sorrentino's own 'Naïve Melody'.

## Private lives

The enigma of pop life is our way into the film's oddball fabulation. We all wonder what pop stars do when they're off duty, what idiocies they get up to in the comfort of their own overpriced homes – as witness *The Osbournes*. It's even more of a puzzle when they're apparently in long-term hiatus, or retired. (What has Bowie been up to all these years in his Swiss eyrie? What do Kraftwerk do when they're not cycling or fixing circuit boards?) As Sorrentino told me on his recent London visit, "I'm fascinated by the subject of someone relatively young, who's got a lot of money and nothing to do. We're all affected by a state of collective hypnosis – we think that people who have been famous are crystallised in time and remain exactly as we knew them at the zenith of their career, and it's always a shock when we realise that they're not like that."

But Cheyenne isn't crystallised so much as fossilised: well into middle age, he's still in the same old war paint. He's abandoned music,



following the suicides of two teenagers inspired by his miserabilist songs. Now he just mooches around and occasionally dabbles in financial speculation (the gag about him trading Tesco shares is priceless, but I'm not sure whether it's because of the juxtaposition of Tesco and Cheyenne, or of Tesco and Sean Penn). Cheyenne is his own caricature, one of Sorrentino's goblin-dandies, like Geremia in *The Family Friend* or the ageing crooner in his 2001 debut *One Man Up* (*L'uomo in più*). We're repeatedly told that he's a child who's failed to grow up – but he's also prematurely ancient, pickled in the aspic of his outmoded image.

He's also set up as the archetypal lonely rich boy, gloomily microwaving a pizza in his luxury kitchen. But here's a nice twist: for a change, it's not lonely at the top. Cheyenne has been happily married for 35 years to Jane, a loving, cheerful and very tolerant woman played by a boisterously impish Frances McDormand. Bustling with life, Jane is a firefighter (a sudden shot of a helmeted McDormand up a crane is one of the film's best visual gags). She plays fives with Cheyenne in their empty swimming pool (Penn wears goggles, white sports socks and tiny satin shorts) and gives him cheery winks while she practises t'ai chi. In one scene he mumbles, "I think I'm a tad depressed" – but he's performing cunnilingus on her at the time and, despite his grumbling, she compliments him on his technique. The couple are made for each other, and the pairing is based partly on Robert Smith's own famously enduring partnership (plus perhaps a dash of Ozzy and Sharon) – and partly, Sorrentino has admitted, on his own marriage.

The film's opening section is set in Dublin – mainly, Sorrentino has claimed, because the locale is "both beautiful and melancholy", although it is also exactly the sort of place that rock stars retire to for tax reasons. Sorrentino and his regular DP, the virtuoso Luca Bigazzi, make the most of the setting – not least in the appearance of a vast, spaceship-like shopping centre, seen at the end of a nondescript residential street. Oddball characters parade by, in gentle sitcom mode: Cheyenne's shag-crazy slob associate; a cocky up-and-coming indie boy; a nerdy mall worker hopelessly in love with Mary; and, in more sombre mode, Mary's mother (Olwen Fouéré), who's depressed because her son has gone AWOL (a sketchily hinted subplot that, I suspect, has itself gone AWOL in the editing).

Then the film takes a daring leap, as Cheyenne is summoned to New York to the home of his dying father, whom he hasn't seen for 30 years. Here's a surprise: we knew Cheyenne was American, but who would have suspected he was Jewish, from an Orthodox background? Being a Goth seems somehow fundamentally un-Jewish (we knew there were Jewish heavy metallers, though: see *Anvil! The Story of Anvil*). To be raised in Jewish culture – especially, like Cheyenne, as the child of a Holocaust survivor – is to grow up aware that death is a reality, that the universe is full of stress, trouble that's forever got a bead on you. So the last thing you're inclined to do is to cultivate a humourless pose of Romantic morbidity; for Cheyenne to subscribe to such a quintessentially genteel cult is surely the ultimate Jewish son's revolt. That said, a few shots of Orthodox Jews in New York suggest that – sartorially at least –



PHOTOGRAPH BY FABRIZIO MALTSE

## Paolo Sorrentino 'We're all affected by a state of collective hypnosis – we think people who have been famous are crystallised in time and remain as we knew them at the zenith of their career'

Cheyenne hasn't strayed that far from his roots; what is his black garb if not a wild parody of the Hassidic male's uniform?

No wonder Cheyenne is looked at askance by all around him when he returns to his father's house. The shame of the foolish son, the weight of responsibility and history brought to bear on him – signified by a glimpse of his father's wrist tattoo – feels like the film's most authentically Jewish element. The weight of patriarchal disapproval is further embodied by Mordecai Midler, a veteran Nazi hunter à la Simon Wiesenthal (an imposingly bristly and splenetic Judd Hirsch) who variously plays a forbidding Old Testament god figure and a surrogate dad with whom Cheyenne later bonds on the road.

As soon as he returns to the US, Cheyenne faces the cold truth about himself. After a dazzling *coup de cinéma* of a concert scene, which I won't spoil here (I'll just say that it features David Byrne's theme song and a gravity-defying bit of stagecraft), Cheyenne and Byrne meet. They're diametrical opposites, one in black, the other in white, including his shock of hair. Byrne's demonstrating the gizmo that he took to London's Roundhouse a few years ago, the 'playing the building' installation in which, thanks to a keyboard and myriad wires, he literally played the building. The ostentatious artiness of the feat troubles Cheyenne, who blubbers, "David Byrne is an artist... I was a fucking pop star. I wrote dreary songs because they were all the rage." It's a chilling moment of self-awareness: he never had the talent, the wit, the ideas to escape the rut he created for himself. (At least Robert Smith managed to knock out the odd jovial ditty like 'The Lovecats' amid all the gloom.)

But now here's a quest that will perhaps allow Cheyenne to test himself, and make amends for a

prodigal life: he will track down Aloise Lange, the fugitive Nazi who oppressed his father in the Holocaust. Here we must face the film's ostentatious triviality. Nothing could be more 'improper', in terms of subject matter, than to bring together a dimwit rock star and a war criminal – and yes, that's the whole premise of the film, the wild bet that Sorrentino takes on. He's not the first to attempt a knowingly counterintuitive, flip or trivialising take on the camps, by way of offering an alternative (inventively or misguidedly) to the conventional austerity of Holocaust cinema – whether it's the abrasive satire of Paul Schrader's well-intentioned but awkward *Adam Resurrected* (2008) or the mawkish sentiment of *Life Is Beautiful* (1997) and its long-buried *maudit* ancestor from 1972, Jerry Lewis's *The Day the Clown Cried*. (Alternative title for Sorrentino's film: *The Day the Goth Giggled*.)

### In search of America

Cheyenne's quest certainly doesn't take him through any real America – not one that exists outside cinema. The journey feels like a magic-of-the-movies theme ride from the moment Cheyenne is loaned a de luxe car by a Texan financial broker – played by Shea Whigham as a walking dinosaur, an old-school slicked-back Gekko-ite. The car later explodes by spontaneous combustion. Why? Just because. From then on, Cheyenne isn't so much walking across America as slow-schlepping across a dream space measured out in picaresque chance encounters. Some moments are genuinely magical: casing a log cabin, Cheyenne comes face to face with a pensively snorting bison. Others feel like overt homages to the road tradition: a cluster of tourists in red baseball caps could have walked out of



David Byrne's own '(Thornton) Wild(er) at Heart' fest of folksy ethnography *True Stories* (1986), while Harry Dean Stanton appears as the man who first put wheels on suitcases (something he sure could have used in *Paris, Texas*).

Along the way, Sorrentino and Bigazzi regale us with curve-ball images – unexpected and *recherché* camera movements like the shot that ducks under a huge shiny petrol tanker. There's no obvious justification for many of these shots, just a flamboyant grace and a sense of the camera literally vaulting to capture beautiful, wild or just plain silly images. (To quote the last *S&S* piece I wrote on Sorrentino, his visual riffing is "film style as a convulsive heady euphoria".)

Meanwhile, however, we sense Cheyenne growing up. The process begins with him sitting in on a classroom of students being shown images of the Holocaust; then he plays benign fairy godfather to Rachel (Kerry Condon), a waitress who is Aloise Lange's estranged granddaughter, and her young son. Eventually Mordecai Midler reappears for some testy jousting with Cheyenne, before they catch up with their quarry. Lange is found at his secluded hut on a snowbound plain, where the old man holds forth (an eerily arresting performance by Heinz Lieven). In this long, austere monologue, the deluded old Nazi appears to justify his past crimes. In a horrifying turn of perversity, he pictures himself as the long-standing victim of the man he had once humiliated – Cheyenne's father had written him accusing letters for years. "Most atrocious words, most beautiful words..." Lange complains. "I hated your father because his obsession with me made my life impossible... That's what I call perseverance – greatness even."

The sequence ends with Lange hobbling naked across the snow, the oppressor stripped bare like his victims. It's a disturbing image of retribution, yet one that gives the vulnerable old man a troubling poetic dignity even while it strips him of physical dignity. You find yourself wondering whether this is an adequate response to Lange's crimes – or whether it defuses their horror by granting this moment of truth a sort of eloquent beauty. Still, even if Sorrentino is out of his depth (and the Holocaust is out of most filmmakers' depth, really), you have to admire his daring. Certainly this strange final catharsis enables Sorrentino to send Cheyenne home redeemed, matured, at least unburdened.

Back in Dublin, Mary's mother looks out of her window to see a man walking down the street: middle-aged, hands in the pockets of his downbeat casual clothes, instantly recognisable as Sean Penn. In other words, it's Cheyenne, who's shed his graveyard drag to be the 50-year-old man he's delayed becoming. It's a happy ending, I think (the end-credits music tells us so). And yet Cheyenne's maturing – his becoming ordinary – is rather sad. It's as sad as the similarly conservative ending of another Italian odyssey, *Pinocchio*, in which an irreducibly wild antihero overcomes all obstacles to metamorphose into something as mundane as... a real boy. *Pinocchio* as Nazi hunter? Now that's about as *outré* as it comes.

■ 'This Must Be the Place' is released on 6 April, and is reviewed on page 78

## NAKED MASKS

The screenwriter Paul Mayersberg – famed for his work with Nicolas Roeg – explores the enigma at the heart of Sorrentino's four previous films

Paolo Sorrentino is the most consistently innovative of contemporary Italian filmmakers. His first four films seem almost to be the work of different artists as they jump from one milieu to another, by turns surrealist, minimalist and baroque. Sorrentino's chameleon sensibility, consciously fearful of repetition, devours Italian and American film styles, digesting them in a fusion of genres. Yet he has said his films all share the same point of departure: the sight of a man, usually alone, in a certain place.

From this image he investigates the who and the why. In *The Consequences of Love* (*Le conseguenze dell'amore*, 2004) a man has been living alone in a Swiss lakeside hotel for eight years. In *The Family Friend* (*L'amico di famiglia*, 2006) a man who looks like a vagrant lopes from place to place in a small town. In *Il divo* (2008) an equally enigmatic protagonist is none other than the seven-times prime minister of Italy, Giulio Andreotti. In each case Sorrentino speculates on the identity of these figures in a contradictory way that recalls the Sicilian Pirandello's notion of *maschere nude* – naked masks.

Sorrentino is currently directing episodes of a television series derived from the 2008 film *Gomorrah* – a job that came about after he unknowingly bought an apartment in the same building as Matteo Garrone, the director of that film. It may be that coincidence, augury and shock have informed Sorrentino's vision since the death in a car crash of both his parents when he was 17 – an accident that must have left him as alone as the characters of his films to come.

### One Man Up

Sorrentino's first film *One Man Up* (*L'uomo in più*, 2001, finally released on DVD in the UK last year as part of Artificial Eye's Sorrentino box-set) follows the lives of two brothers, both public performers. Tony Pisapia (Toni Servillo) is a nightclub singer; his younger brother Antonio (Andrea Renzi) is a star footballer. Both rise to peaks of fame, only to fall from grace: Tony slowly through cocaine, Antonio suddenly through an injury. The intercutting between their lives is somewhat predictable compared with the surprise-and-suspense modes of Sorrentino's subsequent films. But there is real agony in a scene where Tony watches Antonio on a confessional TV programme, which places them in the same room facing each other and themselves.

Outwardly, the story seems to be about the price of fame; inwardly, it charts the loss of power in the self, a recurring subject of all Sorrentino's films. With its gangster mix of the manic and the cool, *One Man Up* is clearly indebted to *Goodfellas* (and possibly *Heat*). The titles sequence, however,

proclaims a filmmaker of another order, anticipating the cliché-busting image-maker to come. At night and underwater, unidentified divers with powerful lights discover a giant tentacled squid. This stand-alone prologue has no narrative connection to the story that follows, but as with a dream, the imagery hauntingly returns in the form of fish tanks suggesting lonely lives lived underwater in prisons of glass. In one scene, for instance, Tony – a voracious eater – selects some squid in a fish market to cook for his dinner.

Sorrentino has said that you can put anything you want at the start of a film because it has, as yet, no context and so will not obtrude as it would if it occurred later. Sorrentino's squid is a reminder of the ability to survive – an image that recurs with the tentacles of the indestructible Andreotti in *Il divo*. The final titles of *One Man Up* find a broken Tony Pisapia struggling to sing 'I Will Survive' in English. His survival seems unlikely, but in Sorrentino's 2010 novel *Hanno tutti ragione* (*They're All Right*), a singer named Tony Pagoda, whose marriage and career have failed, sets off for Brazil and a new life. The lapsed singer is perhaps incarnated in Sean Penn's more-dead-than-alive rocker in *This Must Be the Place* – Sorrentino's characters lean towards the consolations of music.

### The Consequences of Love

According to Sorrentino, Titta di Girolamo (Toni Servillo again), the protagonist of *The Consequences of Love*, is a man who has given up. Remote, fastidious and middle-aged, he has lived by himself in a Swiss hotel for eight years, an enigma to the staff and guests. The film develops slowly, like a detective story in the style of Simenon or Dürrenmatt. Titta is in fact a Mafia bagman who has been pensioned off. His sparse, aphoristic voiceover – "I am not a frivolous man" – conceals a sensualist, a rejected family man whose present heroin addiction is a sublimation of his violent past.

The soulless hotel decor is the mask of the film itself, analogous to Titta's inscrutable face. The gliding camera here is not fatal, as in Murnau, nor dispassionate, as in Mizoguchi, nor teasing, as in Hitchcock. It suggests instead the presence of the director – a presence closer to Antonioni's mysterious camera placements, in which a character can sometimes walk into his own point

**His chameleon sensibility, consciously fearful of repetition, devours Italian and American film styles**



of view. There is an extraordinary, giddy shot in which Sorrentino's camera turns over Titta's head to convey his otherness; his face revolves upside down, mask-like, and back again to suggest his drugged state.

*The Consequences of Love* is not as minimalist a film as it first appears. It resonates with evocative images: cars are shrouded in silver plastic in an underground lot, a maid shakes out white bed sheets for a sick man or a corpse, a hearse passes on the street below Titta's room. These images imply a man already dead. Then, in a sudden, desperate need to regain his living state, Titta approaches the previously ignored hotel barmaid Sofia (Olivia Magnani). Unzipping her top, he opens the body bag of his past and his future.

In a cool, elaborate strategy – the hitman's last job – he steals money from the mob to buy Sofia an expensive car; the style erupts into elliptical, percussive cutting to loud music, propelling him forwards and backwards at the same time. With a gun in his hand Titta becomes vital, alive, but not the cliché vengeful gangster involved with a worthless woman – because Sorrentino has a Fellini-like belief in human goodness. Titta being lowered into liquid cement is a saintly death. His grave site may one day become another soulless hotel to be occupied by another like himself.

## The Family Friend

*The Family Friend*, Sorrentino's most fearlessly radical work, opens with a nun buried up to her head on a sandy beach, young women playing volleyball, a horse being broken in: these are images waiting to be summoned in the surrealist narrative, itself a contradiction, that follows. An ugly, shuffling man with a broken arm, Geremia (Giacomo Rizzo) is a shark who preys on local people in his small town, charging exorbitant interest for loans. He is a sexual reptile who lusts after blonde beauty-contest winner Rosalba (Laura Chiatti), for whose upcoming wedding he loans her family money.

On Rosalba's wedding day Geremia offers to mend the broken strap of her dress (he was once a tailor) without charge. In a scene of extraordinary eroticism he puts his long fingernail on her bare shoulder, then moves it down to her breast. He subsequently rapes her. Rosalba's disgust turns to fascination with this hateful creature: "We're sick," he says, "but we're beautiful."

Perhaps the volleyball women are emblematic of all the women Geremia toys with: a Romanian maid, a fat lady with bouncing breasts, a bingo-addicted grandma. Perhaps the buried nun represents the state of all women, believers and godless alike. Geremia's mind works like his creator's, lusting after surreal moments. There are times



## MEN ALONE

**Above: Giacomo Rizzo in 'The Family Friend'; top: Toni Servillo in 'The Consequences of Love'**

when the beast looks positively handsome, alone in the sombre interior of his cluttered house.

When the Mafia enters the story, offering Geremia a million-euro scam, Sorrentino jumps from one genre to another with such abruptness there's no time to figure what kind of film this is. The soundtrack equally bounces from Elgar to the unclassifiable Antony and the Johnsons, unexpected music cues reminiscent of Kubrick and Roeg. Even the place where Geremia lives seems to be a mixture of different towns. There are buildings of the Fascist period, beautiful despite the politics; deserted colonnades *à la* de Chirico – austere yet romantic structures, their function hard to guess. No cars appear, so the decade is unspecified. The suits and dresses are conventional, fashionless, denials of change or progress. A left-field visit to Rome has out-of-work actors dressed as centurions for tourists. History is a pantomime, yet Sorrentino's filmography is spiked with documentaries, so reality must exist for him.

## Il divo

At the centre of *Il divo* is Giulio Andreotti (Servillo, of course), an inscrutable, bespectacled living mask who is himself centreless in his own labyrinth. Manipulating men and organisations, Andreotti's sole purpose is to retain power. He has no exit strategy, the film no 'Rosebud' revelation. Sorrentino has said that power in Italy is unfathomable, hence the permanent chaos. The film's

bewildering litany of facts, characters and situations defies summary. Like that dark comedy of survivals *The Exterminating Angel*, *Il divo* subverts the very idea of narrative coherence.

*Il divo* is Sorrentino's *Godfather*, but without the father. In fact, Andreotti lost his own father when young. He has replaced the Neapolitan *famiglia* by appointing his own entourage of supporting players, *personaggi* often uncertain of their roles, by turns accommodating and rebellious. It is possible to see the film as Andreotti's dream life-theatre. Servillo is an emblematic Roman statue of power; his stony head suffers incessant headaches, unseen dreams, wished for or feared – among them the murder of Aldo Moro. Andreotti's repetitious expressions and often banal utterances are the spoken masks of a fundamentally silent man.

When the film appeared, Sorrentino was confounded by the reactions of Italian politicians: there were none. The men who were among Andreotti's entourage suddenly became as inscrutable as the man himself, making the whole enterprise – man and film – a triumph of secrecy.

The lavish interiors are photographed by DP Luca Bigazzi in a style as flamboyant as Toni Servillo's performance is withdrawn. Spaciousness becomes claustrophobic, as in Hotel Marienbad. *Il divo* exists within a fully documented historical reality. And yet the film still seems dateless. The cast of characters could be the costumed power-brokers, hangers-on, crooks secular and ecclesiastical, from centuries ago, treading the same marble floors. Are they reincarnations or Pirandellian impersonations?



# Reader offers

## COMPETITIONS

### ZONA: Five copies of 'Stalker' book to be won

Subtitled "a book about a film about a journey to a room", award-winning novelist Geoff Dyer's new book *Zona* takes as its subject Andrei Tarkovsky's film *Stalker*. Published by Canongate Books, it takes the reader on a thought-provoking journey through Dyer's own personal

account of the film, immersing them in every moment of it. Dyer also makes points of departure towards such subjects as colour theory, his personal life and Chernobyl for a digressive exploration of cinema and of how we understand our obsessions. We have five copies to give away.

To be in with a chance of winning, please answer the following question:

**Q. In Tarkovsky's 'Stalker' what are the professions of the two men who are taken into the Zone?**

- a. Writer and Professor
- b. Philosopher and Scientist
- c. Soldier and Spy



WIN

### WOJCIECH HAS: Restored editions of two films to be won

*The Hourglass Sanatorium* and *The Saragossa Manuscript*, by the legendary Polish director Wojciech Has, have both been painstakingly restored by Mr Bongo Films. The former is a magic-realist vision of pre-World War II Poland, in which lead character Joseph travels through a dreamlike world as he visits his father in a sanatorium. In *The Saragossa Manuscript* a soldier during the Napoleonic wars discovers a magical manuscript. The film descends into intricate interwoven plots from the humorous to the horrifying, spanning centuries and nations. We have five pairs to give away.

To be in with a chance of winning, please answer the following question:

**Q. Who was the cinematographer on 'The Hourglass Sanatorium'?**

- a. Witold Sobocinski
- b. Mieczyslaw Jahoda
- c. Stefan Matyjaszkiewicz



WIN

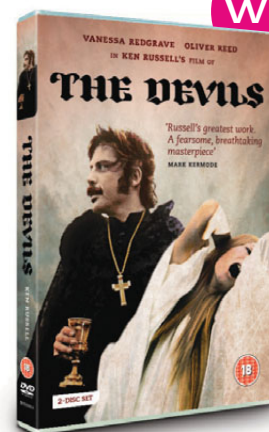
### KEN RUSSELL: Five copies of 'The Devils' on DVD

The late, maverick director Ken Russell is celebrated by the BFI with his landmark film *The Devils* finally making its way to DVD for the first time in its original UK X-certificate version. This 17th-century tale stars Oliver Reed as a promiscuous priest who stands accused of the demonic possession of a nun (Vanessa Redgrave). The wealth of extra material on this 2-disc special edition includes a newly filmed introduction with broadcaster Mark Kermode, and the documentary *Director of Devils* (1971), which features candid Ken Russell interviews. A booklet of new essays accompanies the DVD. We have five copies to give away.

To be in with a chance of winning, please answer the following question:

**Q. Who wrote the original source book for 'The Devils'?**

- a. D.H. Lawrence
- b. George Orwell
- c. Aldous Huxley



WIN

### 100 IDEAS THAT CHANGED FILM: Five copies to be won

*100 Ideas That Changed Film* by David Parkinson, published by Laurence King, chronicles the most influential ideas that have shaped film since its inception. Arranged in chronological order to show the development of film, it focuses on innovative concepts, technologies, techniques and

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To be in with a chance of winning, please answer the following question:

**Q. In Robert Wiene's 'The Cabinet of Dr Caligari', who plays Dr Caligari?**

- a. Friedrich Feher
- b. Rudolf Lettinger
- c. Werner Krauss



WIN

## HOW TO ENTER

Email your answer, name and address, putting either 'The Devils DVD', 'Wojciech Has DVDs', 'Zona book' or '100 Ideas That Changed Film books' in the subject heading, to [s&scompetition@bfi.org.uk](mailto:s&scompetition@bfi.org.uk). Or send a postcard with your answer to either 'The Devils DVD competition', 'Wojciech Has DVDs competition', 'Zona Book competition', or '100 Ideas That Changed Film competition', Sight & Sound, BFI, 21 Stephen Street, London W1T 1LN.

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**TOGA AND TABOO**  
Left: 'Jayne Mansfield's Car'. Facing page, clockwise: 'Caesar Must Die', 'Tabu', 'Barbara', 'Sister'

**T**hough the temperature at Potsdamer Platz was even colder than usual, the more experimental Forum section had been reduced and films in the Panorama section were harder to see, the general feeling about this year's Berlinale was 'business as usual'. But then 'business as usual' means different things to different constituencies. Nearly everyone I spoke to near the end had only a handful of films to recommend, but each had different films in mind. With a programme that's so huge, you might see 30 films, admire only five – and miss five others due to programme clashes.

But you can't say the Berlinale doesn't work. Ticket sales have reached an enviably high level this year – it's a hugely popular city event. All the same, the festival's amiable director Dieter Kosslick – who's under contract until 2016 – came under pressure last autumn from a German critics' symposium that asked "What Now After All the Bad Reviews?" Almost every year the competition gets a critical pasting (I've damned it myself more than once), but this year I did notice a shift for the better. The usual dominance of the facilities by the European Film Market has receded, no doubt because people have dropped out of the business. Unlike the weak line-ups of the past, so heavily dependent on 'issue' films, this year's competition had a more aesthetic edge, and the overall quality was higher, even if it lacked peaks to match last year's *A Separation*, *Pina* or *The Turin Horse*.

Mike Leigh's jury set the cat among the canaries, however, by awarding the Golden Bear to the

Taviani brothers' *Caesar Must Die* (*Cesare deve morire*), when there was such a stand-out critics' favourite in Miguel Gomes's *Tabu*. Cue outrage from commentators too young perhaps to feel anything for the venerable Italians whose most visible achievements – *Padre Padrone* (1977), *The Night of San Lorenzo* (1982), *Kaos* (1984) – were made such a long time ago.

I'll come to the competing films shortly, but what made this media howl interesting was that it didn't feel at all like business as usual. It felt as if the new cinephilia – in which critics feel no requirement to step back from the works they love for a broader view, or worse, seem to know in advance what they will love – was demanding its right to a triumph by writing off anything that got in *Tabu's* way. It's rumoured that one critic was so sure of *Tabu's* excellence he'd tweeted an hour-by-hour countdown to the screening.

Uneasy as I am with this treating of favourite directors as if they were saints or football teams, I too would have given *Tabu* the big prize. Gomes's film had heaps more sensitivity, invention and intelligence at work than anything else in sight. Essentially a story of remembered *amour fou*, with a title and chapter headings borrowed from F.W. Murnau's similarly themed 1929 film, *Tabu* opens with a comic prelude about a doom-struck 19th-century explorer in Africa whose lover died when he left her. He travels to the ends of the earth in an attempt to forget her, but he cannot – and so offers himself to be eaten by a crocodile. Filmed in mild tribute-cum-mockery of early ethnographic cinema, with the drama presented as a series of

hemmed-in tableaux of native groups, this short section sets an absurdist tone reminiscent of Oliveira. It also signals *Tabu* as a film with a fascination for vintage filmmaking techniques to match that of Raya Martin's *Independencia* and Apichatpong Weerasethakul's *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives*.

The film proper begins with two elderly women neighbours in present-day Lisbon. Pilar is a pragmatic worrier, and her neighbour Aurora the cause of concern. Santa, Aurora's live-in Cape Verdean housekeeper, asks Pilar if she can bring Aurora back from the Estoril casino where she's blown all her savings. Aurora complains that she's a prisoner of Santa, who's in the pay of Aurora's daughter. To describe more of what unfolds from here would be to spoil your enjoyment of the intricate ways in which Gomes sidles you into his deeply romantic and very witty story of a forbidden love affair in Africa some 50 years earlier.

These African sequences, played out in silence to a voiceover that includes some deliciously purple love letters, are what justifies the theft of Murnau's title. They show an expressionist vision of adultery between young Aurora (Ana Moreira), then a smouldering vamp, and her husband's best friend Ventura (Carlotto Cotta), a moustachioed Errol Flynn lookalike who's the sometime drummer in a band that plays Phil Spector songs.

What prevents this formally enticing film (which did win the Fipresci Prize and the Albert Bauer Prize for innovation) from achieving true 'greatness' is that its emotional heart lies in the wry present-day material, and in the richly romantic ➡

*A very public battle for the Golden Bear between Portuguese maverick Miguel Gomes and*

# PLATZ ENTERTAINMENT





Italy's one-time arthouse darlings the Tavianis divided Berlin this year, says **Nick James**





## Berlin Film Festival

letters that are laced into the voiceover narrative. The last and most melodramatic quarter of the film pales, like all pastiche. Yet this year's Berlin selection would have seemed routine without this gracious love letter to cinema.

The dismissals handed out to Paolo and Vittorio Taviani's **Caesar Must Die**, however, were undeserved. Their monochrome drama-documentary about prisoners staging Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* intermingles play rehearsal with slippage into real squabbles, and absorbs the psychological and visual confines of prison into a *mise en scène* of telling economy. Some of the hard men can't resist being hammy, but most have such trip-wire emotional directness that they're never less than convincing – and Giovanni Arcuri, as Julius Caesar, is a very fine actor indeed. Given the double filter of actors speaking Italian, and English subtitles that don't always seem to have been taken directly from Shakespeare, it's all the more impressive how vividly the play comes across when performed by these granite-faced, built-body street thugs.

### The rest of the field

Among the real disappointments were several films from name directors. It would hard to imagine a sloppier follow-up to the chilling *Kinatay* from Brillante Mendoza than **Captive**. Telling a story based on true events in 2001 about the accidental kidnap of Christian missionaries and tourists by an armed Abu Sayyaf group, the film seems to hustle from one sketchily conceived jungle scene of melting or marring relations to the next, neither involving its audience nor, it would seem, its lead actress Isabelle Huppert, who looks genuinely as if she wished she were elsewhere.

Much as I admire Tony Gatlif's restless search to find an effective cinema poetics for the Occupy movement in **Indignados**, he ends up relying too much on a charming appeal to our better natures. And while one wouldn't say that Guy Maddin's **Keyhole** is any way a 'bad' film, it is an indigestible maelstrom of ideas. It concerns the return of gangster Ulysses Pick (Jason Patric) to the ancestral home that's – initially at least – surrounded by cops. But the house is also brimful of ghosts who don't like to be touched, and somewhere in a room upstairs Pick's wife Hyacinth – played by Maddin's muse Isabella Rossellini – is both waiting for and dreading his return. Maddin's psychosexual shock tactics are as effective as ever, but the feeling of being trapped in a vortex becomes giddily wearying.

I was happy to avoid the noisome dreck of Stephen Daldry's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, having already seen it in London, though it's typical of the kind of film Berlin uses to keep the red carpet occupied. As indeed are other films already on UK release, such as *The Iron Lady*, *Haywire* and *Bel Ami*. One star-driven film I could get behind, however, was Billy Bob Thornton's widely panned **Jayne Mansfield's Car**. Perhaps I got so much pleasure out of it because it refuses to take itself very seriously, even though it's set up to explore deep-etched feelings among an Alabama family much ravaged by the consequences of various wars. It begins with an anti-Vietnam war protest in which middle-aged hippie Carroll Caldwell (Kevin Bacon) is a ringleader – to the disgust

## This year's Berlin selection would have been routine without Gomes's gracious love letter to cinema

of his pappy Jim (Robert Duvall), a community stalwart and car-crash enthusiast. Next day the Caldwells – including Jim's other sons Skip (Thornton) and Jimbo (Robert Patrick), and his daughter Donna Baron (Katherine LaNasa) – learn that their long-gone mother has died in England, and that her second family, the Bedfords, are bringing her body home. What then unfolds is a Tennessee Williams-like set-up of culture clash, with the English Bedfords – with John Hurt as Jim's erstwhile rival – providing a sardonic counterpoint to the louche proclivities of the majority of the Caldwells. Though Thornton's control of tone is erratic, what makes *Jayne Mansfield's Car* compelling are its dashes of lunacy, its breathless ingenuity and its dead-on strain of vicious black humour. It's prime kitsch, and it knows it.

Estimable too is Christian Petzold's **Barbara**, which won the Best Director Silver Bear for the maker of such frosty psychodramas as *Yella* and *Jerichow*. In a backwater town in 1960s Communist East Germany, Barbara (Nina Hoss), an aloof and wary woman doctor, arrives from Berlin to work at the local clinic. The head doctor André (Ronald Zehrfeld) is instantly attracted to her, though the rest of the staff think her standoffish, and indeed he too is rebuffed and accused of spying on her for the authorities. Barbara's resourcefulness – she equips herself with a bike and seems an expert at hiding things from her relentless Stasi stalkers – makes one suspect that she's some kind of trained antagonist of the GDR, though all we learn is that she's applied for an exit visa so she can be with her West German lover. There's a burgeoning warmth to this tale that seems drawn



### TOUT IN THE COLD

Clive Owen and Andrea Riseborough as MI5 handler and IRA informer in James Marsh's **'Shadow Dancer'**

from the Russian medical stories of the kind that André lends to Barbara as their relationship slowly thaws. Hoss gives a pinpoint performance of elegant resistance, blank suspicion and wariness.

A similarly beset woman is at the centre of **Shadow Dancer**, James Marsh's equally low-temperature thriller about the turning of an IRA killer into an informant or "tout". Collette (Andrea Riseborough), a mother from Catholic Northern Ireland whose baby brother was shot dead when she was a child, is nabbed in London during a failed bombing attempt. Blackmailed by her MI5 captor Mac (Clive Owen) into snooping on her zealot of a brother, she's soon under the suspicion of the IRA heavies. Riseborough looks suitably authentic strutting Belfast streets in a bright-red coat, and there are one or two strong scenes – the standout being the local funeral that gets turned into a military send-off right under the noses of the RUC. But the script is weak and too reliant on the clichés of double-cross and the well-worn rituals of Troubles dramas. The contrast with *Barbara* is stark indeed.

Another pairing that sat either side of the success-failure line were Frédéric Videau's **Coming Home** (*A moi seule*) and Ursula Meier's *Sister* (*L'Enfant d'en haut*). The former describes an implausible scenario in which the kidnapper of small schoolgirl Gaëlle treats her well (apart from locking her up all the time) and never lays a hand on her. When Gaëlle grows up (now played by Agathe Bonitzer), she escapes, and the rest of the film is about her attempts to deal with what happened. **Sister**, meanwhile, follows 12-year-old Simon (Kacey Mottet Klein), who lives in an alpine valley and spends every day stealing ski equipment from the resort above. He brings back his booty to sell to his friends and help feed his itinerant sister Louise (Léa Seydoux), who may be a prostitute. Though Bonitzer is certainly a face to watch, *Coming Home* never transcends its limited concept of kidnapper-captive tryst; *Sister*, though it comes and goes somewhat, remains compelling.

Two films on show are already set for UK release this month. **Iron Sky**, the by-now notorious Finnish Nazis-on-the-moon sci-fi spoof, provided the requisite light entertainment of Nazi kitsch, *Star Trek* tributes and sex jokes skirting 'Allo 'Allo territory, but it needed better one-liners. **Marley**, Kevin Macdonald's enjoyably lengthy tribute to reggae legend Bob, will sit beautifully in that BBC4 music-doc slot. Given that it was made under the aegis of Ziggy Marley, we must forgive its hagiographic repetitiveness, but it does (at times) explore the darker side of being a legend.

My favourite festival moment, however, was a different musical one. It came from the modest Swedish mood-thriller **Avalon**, a kind of gangster film without guns about baby boomers at the end of their tether. At one moment the protagonist (the superbly haggard Johannes Brost) wanders into a disco just as the DJ begins playing Roxy Music's 'Avalon'. He dances along – as only someone for whom the song means better days can dance – in a kind of half-floating marionette fashion. Whether the Berlinale can bring back better days remains to be seen, but this year's programme was a start.

■ 'Iron Sky' is released on 4 April, and 'Marley' on 20 April



# DRACULA

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With his 2011 Cannes sensation 'Once upon a Time in Anatolia', the great Turkish director Nuri Bilge Ceylan turns his contemplative eye on a police investigation. He talks to **Geoff Andrew**, and overleaf shares his insightful personal diary of the editing process

# JOURNEY TO THE END OF THE NIGHT

**H**ad one of Terrence Malick's infrequent epics (and a history of the universe at that!) not played in competition in Cannes last May, the Palme d'Or would almost certainly have gone to *Once upon a Time in Anatolia* (*Bir zamanlar Anadolu'da*). As it turned out, the Turkish film's writer-director Nuri Bilge Ceylan had to be content with sharing the Grand Prix (the second prize) with the Dardenne brothers. But however strong the Belgians' *The Kid with a Bike* was, it didn't feel as audacious or groundbreaking as Ceylan's idiosyncratic and magnificent variation on the *policier*. For many, *Once upon a Time in Anatolia* was not only the most remarkable of the director's six features to date (no mean achievement in itself, given the consistently high standard of his work); it was also the finest film in Cannes – and, for this writer, the greatest of last year.

Long and slow but wholly engrossing from the opening shot onwards, the film's lithe narrative – seemingly digressive but in fact meticulously constructed – begins at dusk and ends around the middle of the following day. It follows the search, by a small town's team of police, a prosecutor, a doctor and various drivers and diggers, for the body of a man buried out in the steppes after a drunken brawl. The man who confessed to the killing is also with them, though he can't recall the exact location of the makeshift grave; nor, for that matter, will he say what the fatal argument was about. Not that some of the search party seem particularly concerned with finding out, so preoccupied are they with discussing their own problems and indulging in petty rivalries.

As the rambling, shambling, for some time seemingly futile investigation proceeds, Ceylan uses it as the framework for a richly quizzical meditation on a range of themes: the mores and manners of provincial life; the way we're shaped by where we live; the balancing of ethics and pragmatism; our responsibilities to our loved ones; and our need to hold on to the banalities of life when faced with misfortune, absurdity and death. Though packed with piercing insights, the film never feels solemn, overloaded or excessively 'arty'. That's thanks partly to Ceylan's sure grasp of the subtle rhythms of human interaction, and partly to dialogue that – echoing Ceylan's beloved Chekhov – is at once strangely unemphatic yet allusive and resonant. But it's also down to the dry,

dark but often illuminating wit that made parts of his earlier films *Clouds of May* (*Mayis sikintisi*, 1999), *Uzak* (2002) and *Climates* (*Iklimler*, 2006) so amusing. Then, too, there are the evocative 'Scope images shot – as for *Climates* and *Three Monkeys* (*Uc maymun*, 2008) – by Gökhan Tiryaki, but as elegantly composed and exquisitely atmospheric as Ceylan's own extraordinary work both as photographer and as his own cinematographer on the films up to and including *Uzak*.

What follows is a distillation of two interviews, one conducted in Cannes, the other in London. Though the plot details of the murder investigation are not the most significant aspects of Ceylan's film, they are of course crucial to the experience of watching it unfold, so I've endeavoured to remove any parts of our conversations that might have constituted narrative spoilers.

**Geoff Andrew:** Could you explain the genesis of 'Once upon a Time in Anatolia'?

**Nuri Bilge Ceylan:** The idea came from a real story. One of my friends, Ercan Kesal – who also acted in and worked on the script of both this film and *Three Monkeys* – is a doctor, and as we know from Chekhov, doctors have lots of stories. And Ercan had lived through something like this. He told me about it over dinner one evening. In Turkey doctors are obliged to spend two years in Anatolia, and when he became a doctor, back in the 80s when he was about 25 years old, he went to the town where we ended up shooting this movie. He spent about five years there, and during that time he had to go one evening with the police in search of a body; it took until morning to find it. And he told me that by the end of the night the people on the search had become quite friendly towards the culprit, sharing cigarettes with him and so on. But then when they found the body, all Ercan could feel towards the culprit – just as the others did – was anger.

I felt that such a story, such a situation, might enable me to deal with the darker side of human nature. So the three of us – my wife Ebru, Ercan and myself – began to work it into a script. Of course, Ercan had forgotten many of the details, but we would obviously have changed things a lot anyway. And of course I added quotations from Chekhov – we even give him a credit!

**GA:** But it's not just quotations: there are also little events reminiscent of Chekhov's stories. The film seems imbued with the spirit of Chekhov.

**NBC:** Probably – I don't know. I love Chekhov, as ➡



**THE SCENE OF THE CRIME**  
Clockwise from top: director Nuri Bilge Ceylan; the searchers stop at a fountain on the steppe; the victim's wife (Nihan Okutucu); DA Nusret (Taner Birsel); suspect Kenan (Firat Tanis, right in main pic) with Commissioner Naci (Yilmaz Erdogan)







◀ you know, but I can't see the film the way you can. But I should say that the characters are definitely very Turkish. Happily, audiences in Turkey have responded to the film well, and seem to find it very authentic. Maybe all that shows is that Chekhov wrote in a way that was universal in its relevance.

**GA:** Like your earliest features, this new film feels very personal.

**NBC:** If you want to be 'realistic', you must start from specifics. Fundamentally, wherever we live, we're pretty much the same and share much the same main values. So while I make movies that are very 'local', people all over the world seem to understand them.

**GA:** But do you yourself know Anatolia very well?

**NBC:** Oh yes! I spent my childhood in an Anatolian town. My father was a bureaucrat there, and I remember a great many details about those small-town bureaucrats, so when Ercan told me his story, all that came into play as well. For instance, how they used to try to humiliate each other – there was always some sort of conflict going on, some struggle to gain power or authority. My father found it very difficult being with them, especially as they'd separate themselves from the townsfolk, socialising in different places and so on.

I'd wanted to make a film about such people for a long while. And I knew it wouldn't be that easy to watch, because they're not exactly likeable! I knew the film would be long, maybe even tedious in places. Well, not tedious – that's too negative! – but I did want to break out a little.

Compared to literature, where you've a lot of freedom in what you write, cinema seems bound by strict 'rules'. The market pushes you to make films that last 90 minutes or so, or at least feel like that. But I wanted to break with that – I wanted audiences to feel at least some of the frustration the search party feel. My box office is pretty modest, and I thought that those people who insist on seeing short, fast movies are probably not going to come to mine anyway. So I didn't really need to worry about them.

**GA:** Let's return to what it's like in Anatolia. It intrigued me how, when your characters insult each other, they often do it by insulting the villages they're from.

**NBC:** That's what happens! Even when my parents were having an argument, they would blame one another's roots! That's how people think they can cause the most pain, by laying the blame on something the insulted person can do nothing about.

**GA:** I was fascinated by the gulf between the opinions of the local police chief about how justice should be meted out, and those of the doctor and the prosecutor, who are from the city. Was that discrepancy in their notions of crime and punishment important to you?

**NBC:** It comes down to different personalities as well as different backgrounds. But it's true the doctor and prosecutor have had more of an education. Indeed, that's why I chose to have the prosecutor tell his own story to the doctor – it shows there's that link between them. But it's not just about education – I felt both men had a melancholic side.

**GA:** The doctor is a city type living in the country whereas you – as we know from 'Clouds of May' and 'Uzak' – grew up in the country but live in the city. Is the doctor the character closest to yourself?

**NBC:** Definitely. He's the character I know best, so ▶

## THE SECOND MARATHON

*Nuri Bilge Ceylan kept a diary while editing 'Once upon a Time in Anatolia', as he tried to give shape to footage from troublesome night shoots. These extracts were originally translated into French by Burçak Taran, then into English by Suzy Gillett*

**Tuesday 22 December 2009**

It has been about ten days since we wrapped the shoot. After eight weeks of shooting, the return to normal life – those apparently insignificant rituals of daily routine – is abrupt, dreamlike. The day after tomorrow a new marathon will start.

**Thursday 24 December 2009**

In the evening [DP] Gökhan [Tiryaki] came over. We watched what we had filmed. Sometimes we were unhappy, at other times satisfied. But we were really happy with the shots around the fourth fountain. *[The film follows the search for the body of a murder victim, which the murderer dimly remembers burying by a fountain out on the steppe. So during the course of a night, the investigators drive the murderer from one fountain to the next, in search of the right one.]*

**Friday 25 December 2009**

We started editing today.

From the start I had wanted to film the first fountain scene in one long wide shot. This was the first scene we had with the actors – the first time we would discover, finally, truly, what the performances were like. As with my previous films, we hadn't done any read-through or prior rehearsal. I'd felt very nervous when the cars set off from the hill and started their slow approach. The vehicles arrived in front of the fountain, stopped, and the actors spread out and started to act. But how? I had no sound feed in my ears. The sound technician arrived in a panic.

As I'd wanted the blue of night, we didn't have much time. We immediately went on to do the second take. Still no sound feed. As I couldn't hear anything, it was impossible for me to direct the actors. Precious minutes ebbed away. It wasn't a good start to the shoot.

I looked at the scene we'd shot. It clearly wasn't working. The actors had all gone off in different directions, each one acting his piece in his own way. It felt false. Because of this scene I was deeply worried about the rest of the film.

**Sunday 27 December 2009**

Today we started on the second fountain.

The first half of the film takes place in the fields, in the middle of the night. An incredible cold reigns there. For us behind the camera it was more or less bearable – we'd wrapped up in padded jackets and Arctic wear. But the actors had to wear the costumes for their scenes, and these costumes didn't keep the cold out.

As the only light sources would be the headlights of the cars and moonlight, we had to conceive a very strong moonlight. We'd even brought with us an enormous helium balloon, but

it was unusable because of wind. We had to come up with another solution.

Gökhan managed to create a very beautiful light by putting a 25-kilowatt light inside a handmade soft box, which they put on a crane and elevated to a height of 30 or 40 metres. The result proved to be quite extraordinary – well beyond what the helium balloon offered. Apart from that, we replaced the headlights of the cars with much stronger bulbs, as the headlights had to cut through the moonlight.

With our modifications, the immeasurable immensity of the steppe capitulated slightly at our insistence.

**Friday 1 January 2010**

New Year. This afternoon, as if weighed down by the accumulation of fatigue from all these years, I lay down on the bed and fell asleep, fully clothed, for several hours. When I opened my eyes, I had the impression of waking up with a new form of perception. In the silence, before my eyes, in a fluid fashion, the immobile objects in my room

## It's obvious that we should slow down the rhythm of our lives so that our senses are sharpened

surrounded me with infinite affection, as if the doors of a different level of perception had just opened. I stayed lying there with my eyes open for over an hour.

My senses felt completely alert. This state allowed me to take enormous pleasure in life. I understood that I don't truly feel the emotions of everything I live, because we live at such a frenetic rhythm. It's obvious that we should slow down the rhythm of our lives so that our senses are sharpened. Here resides my reason for liking films that are slow in pace – and my desire to make this kind of film. This state of mind that I felt on waking today can only appear through a slow and languorous rhythm.

**Monday 4 January 2010**

Today we reworked the dialogue scenes from the interior of the car, which we'd edited quite quickly yesterday. Watching them I understood once again how right my decision to work with Yilmaz [Erdogan, who plays Commissioner Naci] was. Yilmaz is a very intelligent, inventive actor who really listens to the actor in front of him. (Unfortunately it is a rare quality among actors.) During the



takes, if the other actor's acting changes by a millimetre, it's reflected in Yilmaz's acting.

#### **Tuesday 12 January 2010**

Today we checked the material for the fourth fountain. My first impression is that the images and sound have started to improve.

As sound is an element that can be done in the studio, I don't give it much attention while I'm shooting. From time to time, the boom operator makes himself noticed by getting the boom into shot. Between the DP and the boom operator there is often an atmosphere of terror. It's completely normal. The boom operator makes his calculations to get as close to the actor as he can, by centimetres.

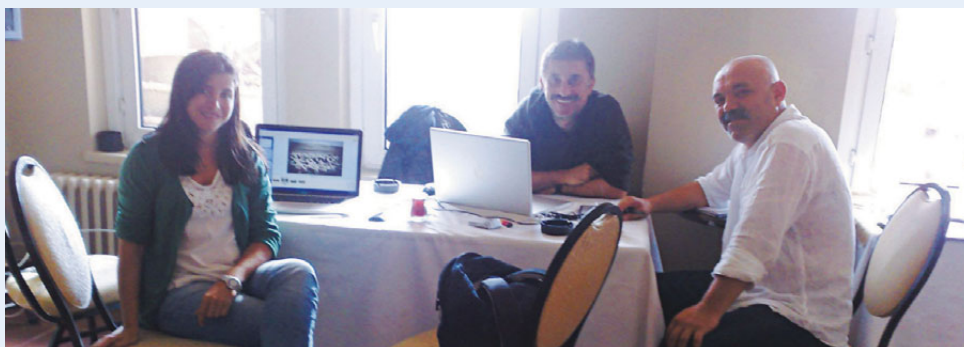
Towards the end of the takes of the third fountain, I vaguely noticed that the boom operator was no longer being terrorised. Each time I thought about it, I forgot about it. And then, during a close-up on Arap Ali [the driver, played by Ahmet Mümtaz Taylan], I heard Gökhan ask the boom operator what he was doing. I turned around. I saw that the operator had put the boom on the ground and was trying to record the sound *beside the camera*. If he had chosen the classic position, with a microphone above the head of the actor, he could have got as close as 15 centimetres, rather than two metres! I immediately asked him why he was doing it like that. He just looked at me stupidly.

I went to ask Mehmet Kiliçel, the experienced sound recordist – without getting a satisfactory response. Long silences, furtive eyes. That evening I went to see Mehmet in the studio and asked him to play some of the recordings for me to listen to. As I had suspected, it was a catastrophe. For a start we had no 'boom' sound – they had relied on the radio mics and the sound was full of rustling of clothing. At this point I decided to replace the boom operator.

Happily the sound recorded by the new team for the scenes of the fourth fountain is clear and impeccable. In sum, we were happy in our work today. The sound is clear, the shots impeccable, the light is good. The result reflects what we had written.

This evening, at home, [Cannes Film Festival artistic director] Thierry Frémaux telephoned. He thanked me for the book I'd sent him. Then he asked if the film would be ready for Cannes. I told him it would not be ready. I told him the film was complicated and that I wanted to avoid any rush. He asked me to see if there might be a possibility somehow.

*In the end it was a year later, in 2011, that 'Once upon a Time in Anatolia' made its way to Cannes, where it was shown in competition and won the Grand Prix.*



**THE SCRIPT** Ceylan, centre, with his two co-writers: his wife Ebru, left, and doctor Ercan Kesal, right



**THE SET-UP** Ceylan, left, on location with director of photography Gökhan Tiryaki



**NIGHT SHOOT** To create a moonlight effect out on the steppe, a 25kw light was raised on a crane



**THE EDIT** Ceylan in post-production on 'Once upon a Time in Anatolia' with Bora Gökşingöl



## Nuri Bilge Ceylan *Once upon a Time in Anatolia*

◀ it was easy to create him. Especially his nihilistic attitude! He reads a Lermontov poem, for example, which is pretty nihilistic. But also he's rather distant from the world around him, and I'm like that. He's not as close to other people as the local townsfolk are.

**GA:** To me the film is about how we can never really know why people do what they do. We may have our suspicions as to their – and our – motivations, but that's all.

**NBC:** Life's often very ambiguous, so why not the cinema too? Generally, our attitude to life means we not only protect ourselves but deceive ourselves. Perhaps that's the most difficult thing for us to understand – that we don't even know the reality about ourselves!

With regard to ambiguity, literature has an advantage over cinema because it uses the reader's imagination so much more. In the cinema, if you don't ensure that the audience's imaginations are activated, you can't go very deep. So I try to include lots of ambiguous details, so that everyone has to try to create their own 'reality' for the film. That said, ambiguity is certainly not the same as arbitrariness. Ambiguity should always be carefully worked out. As a director you always need to know the answers to any questions raised in your film.

**GA:** You shoot the autopsy very carefully: you show almost nothing of the examination, and just use dialogue and sound.

**NBC:** I don't like showing blood and things like that, and if you can do things with sound, it's so much better. It allows viewers to imagine it themselves. That way they feel it's real.

**GA:** As with your earlier films, I was impressed by the honest, insightful way you deal with men and masculinity. Not just the rivalry between the characters, but how, for example, if a woman comes up in their conversation, they often feel a need to comment – however briefly and irrelevantly – on her appearance. That focus on male behaviour and psychology seems to be a constant in your work.

**NBC:** I just make films about what I ask myself about the most. I don't think I'd make a movie like Bergman used to, where he'd try to understand a woman or women in great depth. It's not because I don't respect women or anything like that; it's because my main instinct, my main purpose in making a film is to try to understand my own soul – which happens to be a man's soul. I know the darkness in my own soul, the weakness of my own heart – I'm not someone especially good! And I can see the things other men do. So those things are what my films deal with.

**GA:** Is that why you work with your wife Ebru on the script? Does she provide another perspective?

**NBC:** She does help, of course. But I don't think I'm one of those people who just doesn't understand women – I try, after all, to understand what it is to be human. And I sometimes find women stronger than men, for example. But for me making films is an attempt to learn more about my dark side, and by that to give some meaning to my life.

**GA:** Perhaps that's why it feels as if you're trying to push further forward with each film – to do something new and a little different. They're all immediately recognisable as your films, but there are real changes from one to the next. This time there's a change in scale – it feels noticeably bigger, even while it retains the intimacy of your other films. Did you feel you were pushing yourself?

**'Doctor Cemal is the character I know best, so it was easy to create him. He's rather distant from the world around him, and I'm like that'**



**CRISIS OF CONSCIENCE**  
After the group scenes of the first half of *'Once upon a Time in Anatolia'*, Doctor Cemal (Muhammet Uzuner) emerges as the focus of the narrative

**NBC:** Yes. Writing the script was hard this time, especially as there's far more dialogue. We worked very hard on making it authentic – which may mean it loses some nuances in translation, I'm afraid. But it's a difficult process anyway. The three of us get together every day; we talk mostly, then I give Ebru and Ercan 'homework' for each scene. The next day they bring their homework, and we talk again. And all the good stuff they've brought, I collect and use. Because while I too, like them, provide details for each scene, it's I alone who work on the overall structure and story, the bigger picture.

**GA:** Like your last film *'Three Monkeys'*, this was shot digitally. How has that affected the way you work?

**NBC:** Well, post-production was quite tedious, because there were problems transferring to 35mm, so sometimes I wished I'd shot in 35mm. Also, digital technology is changing all the time, so what you learn on one movie won't necessarily help on the next. But it can of course make some things easier. More importantly, it's cheaper if you have a high shooting ratio, as I do. Having a low shooting ratio can make actors nervous and I don't want that. For *Uzak* I shot around 13 hours of footage; for this film it was around 120 hours! Then again, we don't rehearse – we just shoot everything! That way you sometimes catch things you might otherwise miss.

**GA:** But the look of this film is strikingly different from that of *'Three Monkeys'*, which was almost noir-like in its expressionism.

**NBC:** With *Three Monkeys* I wanted to create a look,

an atmosphere, entirely specific to that story – but it was just for that film. This time I wanted to go back to something more naturalistic. But out on the steppes at night, that's difficult. You can't just use the usual spotlights; to create the impression of moonlight, you need huge amounts of light, or it would look completely dark. So our 'naturalism' was very expensive.

**GA:** The films' visual styles may differ, but again, as in *'Three Monkeys'*, death seems to have a strong presence in this film. I'm not just talking about the body that provokes the search; death also figures, one way or another, in a number of conversations. It feels completely ubiquitous.

**NBC:** Death is everywhere, of course, but its presence can often be felt more in the countryside. In the West, especially in cities, we tend to try to hide it, but it's far healthier to acknowledge that death is part and parcel of life.

**GA:** Conversely, the new film is also to some extent concerned with children, or at least our responsibilities towards them.

**NBC:** After becoming a father, I became aware of and concerned with some different aspects of life. And as my son has grown, those changes in me have become even stronger. It's as if I've discovered new sources of love in my heart – I feel almost as if I was quite dry before.

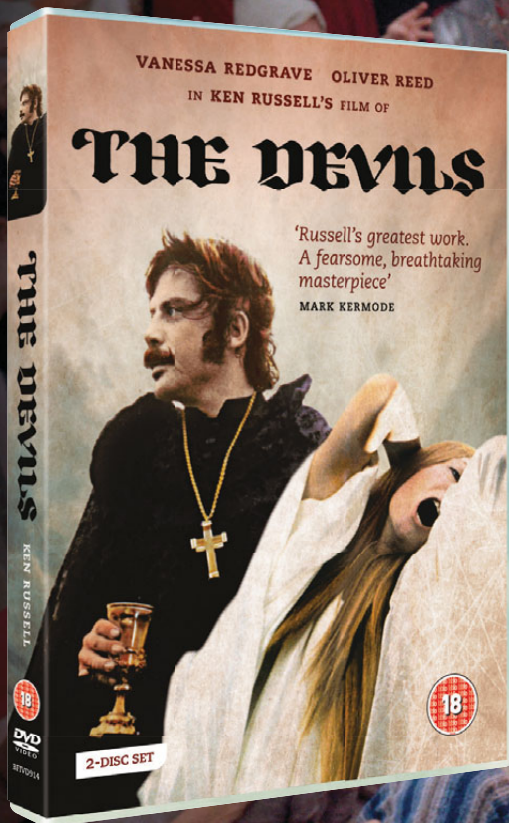
But also, being a parent is perhaps the only real way to go back to childhood yourself – it's almost as if you can live your own life again. And I think all this has somehow begun to make itself felt in my last two films. Just like everything else, it ends up – completely by instinct – going into the things I write.

■ *'Once upon a Time in Anatolia'* is released on 16 March, and is reviewed on page 72



# 'A fearsome, breathtaking masterpiece'

Mark Kermode



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One of a new breed of directors who find their first audience on YouTube, Lena Dunham used self-starring internet shorts as a springboard to her first feature ‘*Tiny Furniture*’, shot in her parents’ loft. But there’s more to her than navel-gazing, says **Melissa Anderson**

# THE 400 HITS

**W**ith its many autobiographical elements *Tiny Furniture*, the first feature by 25-year-old writer-director-actor Lena Dunham, unfolds like the title of the filmmaker’s 2009 featurette: *Creative Nonfiction*. Premiering in the US in March 2010 at the South by Southwest Film Festival (where it won the Best Narrative Feature award), *Tiny Furniture* follows the desultory activities of recent college graduate Aura (played by Dunham, who at the time of filming in the autumn of 2009 was also a recent university grad). She returns to her family’s loft in Tribeca (the director’s real home), which she shares with her artist-photographer mother Siri (played by Dunham’s real artist-photographer mum, Laurie Simmons) and her overachieving high-schooler sister Nadine (the director’s actual younger sibling, Grace Dunham).

Unapologetically solipsistic, Dunham is nevertheless a brutally – often hilariously – honest self-assessor. While Dunham may have started as a curiosity on the internet – the destination, often final, of millions of young serial confessors and overweening self-promoters – she’s made the leap to a more ‘legitimate’ artistic endeavour through a commitment to old-fashioned skills: expanding, editing and honing her primary source material, herself.

Intrinsic to Dunham’s candid self-appraisal is

her almost compulsive exhibitionism. The first of many times we see Aura in her underwear occurs about four minutes into *Tiny Furniture*. After settling into her old room, partly colonised by Nadine in her big sister’s absence, she pads around the chic, minimalist white-on-white loft (shot on digital in pristine compositions by DP Jody Lee Lipes, who went on to shoot *Martha Marcy May Marlene*) in nothing but a T-shirt and undies, revealing plenty of soft, doughy flesh.

Dunham has bared her ample body before, most prominently in her 2007 short film (and YouTube sensation) *The Fountain*, in which she strips down to a bikini and performs ablutions and brushes her teeth in a fountain on the campus of Oberlin College, the prestigious liberal-arts school in Ohio where she studied. (In *Tiny Furniture*, Aura never mentions her alma mater by name, identifying it only as “a college in Ohio”.) During a discussion about “male validation” with her petite, more conventionally pretty dorm-mate in *Creative Nonfiction* (which she shot during her time at Oberlin, and which also features her in various states of undress) Dunham’s character Ella nonchalantly – and without a trace of self-pity – remarks, “I guess I’m not used to getting it.”

By showing off her plus-size body, Dunham conveys her talent for humble narcissism. Her display of her pimpled and puckered flesh seems to be motivated by neither vanity nor aggression; she asks that we consider her – and all her imper-

fections – as much as she considers herself. The precise, droll articulation of her self-absorption is what makes *Tiny Furniture* (and her earlier work) so compelling. Collapsing real/reel distinctions, sending up her highly privileged bourgeois-boho milieu (waggishly treated earlier in Dunham’s web series *Delusional Downtown Divas*) and playing a character as likely to be humiliated as she is to display outrageous selfishness, Dunham has created a sharp quarter-life-crisis comedy informed by oversharing and inertia.

## Frayed bonds

One of *Tiny Furniture*’s greatest narrative strategies is its piercing examination of the frequently frayed bonds between Aura and her mother and sister; the home in Tribeca that the 22-year-old returns to – and that she seems incapable of ever leaving – isn’t always the most hospitable nest. Moping over her recent break-up with her “male feminist” college boyfriend, Aura is so caught up in herself that she seems capable only of regressing, but Siri and Nadine aren’t interested in joining her pity party. “I just got off a plane from Ohio – I’m in a post-graduate delirium,” Aura announces to her antagonising sister, who’s been posing (well, just her high-heeled feet) for photographs in her mother’s studio, located downstairs in the loft. (Siri takes photographs of staged scenes involving dolls and miniatures – hence the film’s title.)

Aura’s ego is bruised within minutes of



returning home: “How come you never use me in any pictures?” she asks Siri, who – intensely focused on her work – doesn’t bother turning around initially to greet her firstborn. “You’re never here,” Siri replies, before snapping another photo. Willoway Nadine, who bears a striking resemblance to her mother, can’t resist this dig: “Plus, my legs are longer and more supple” – a rejoinder followed immediately by this tart query to Aura: “How long are you going to be staying in our house?”

The sibling rivalry between Aura, whose most significant accomplishment during her twenty-something torpor is taking an \$11-an-hour job as a day hostess at a restaurant around the corner from her house, and the casually confident Nadine, who has just won a prestigious poetry prize (as Grace Dunham actually did), spikes *Tiny Furniture* with funny, caustic exchanges. What looms over the film more, though, is the anxiety of influence: specifically the desire that Aura, a film-theory major who’s “trying to figure it out”, has to eclipse – or at least equal – her mother’s artistic fame.

“I wanna be as successful as you are,” Aura says to Siri as they snuggle in the latter’s bed. Siri is single in *Tiny Furniture*, though it’s never made clear whether she’s a divorcée or a widow; that both her grown daughters are shown sleeping next to her on occasion highlights the neediness – and ill-defined boundaries – of all members of the trio. (In real life, Simmons’s husband – and the father of Lena and Grace – is the painter Carroll Dunham, who ‘stars’, along with his wife, in Lena’s 2007 short *Open the Door*.)

## Any exposure

Aura, like Dunham at the time, has some renown among her set as a maker of YouTube videos. “I saw that your dyslexic-stripper video got, like, 400 hits!” Ashlynn (Amy Seimet) – the hostess of a party and herself an aspiring “monologist” – exuberantly notes to Aura, with just a twinge of mockery. (In 2007, Dunham made a short called *Hooker on Campus*.) One of Aura’s dissolute friends, fellow art-world brat Charlotte (played by Jemima Kirke, a friend of Dunham’s since high school), manages to get a piece by her pal into a small group show in Brooklyn. The video (*The Fountain*, repurposed) is presented on a cruddy monitor with no sound. “You’re just so concerned with having things polished and perfect,” Charlotte says to allay Aura’s concerns. “Any exposure is good exposure.” That’s certainly the credo of many Gen-Y artists – and the motivation behind Aura’s (and Dunham’s) exhibitionist practice.

But who gets to call it art? Dunham doesn’t refrain from pointing out the absurdity of the ubiquitous ‘performance pieces’ found online – or of what constitutes fame in the 21st century. And she implicitly includes herself in this assessment. Ashlynn wants Aura to meet Jed (Alex Karpovsky), whose YouTube persona is the “Nietzschean [sic] Cowboy”. Impressed, Aura notes that “he’s a little bit famous” – praise that Ashlynn minimises by adding, “I guess so, in a, like, internet kind of way.” The passive-aggressive slam isn’t lost on Aura.

Her own insecurities, artistic and otherwise (“The art world’s my mom’s racket,” Aura tells Charlotte, adding, “I don’t know what I’ll be”), may be what leads Aura to start reading from the journals her mother kept during her twenties (reportedly Simmons’s actual diaries from the time).

Pilfered from the closet while Aura is rummaging around for lightbulbs, Siri’s notebooks contain her agonising self-doubts about her own art career and love life, excerpts from which her daughter shares with friends over the phone; later, Aura appears to cannibalise this material for one of her videos.

As obnoxious and invasive as she may be, Aura has a particular gift for perpetuating her own debasements, especially with men. Claiming penury, sponger Jed, on whom Aura has a crush, crashes at the loft. Sharing Aura’s bed, Jed makes it clear that he has no interest in reciprocating her extremely tentative advances; she continues the masochistic sleeping arrangement nonetheless. Even worse is Keith (David Call), the cad *sous-chef* at the bistro where Aura works. They have miserable sex in a particularly abject location; yet after returning home an hour or two

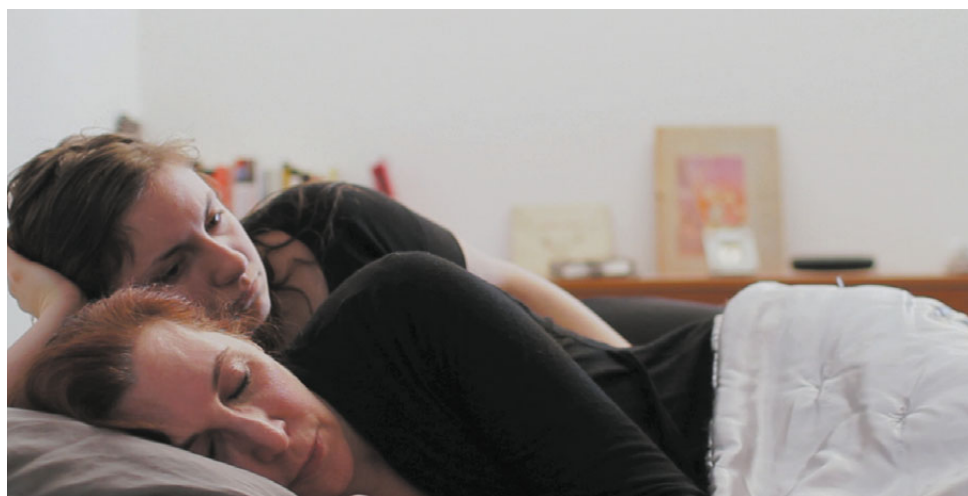
## Unapologetically solipsistic, Dunham is nevertheless a brutally – often hilariously – honest self-assessor

later, Aura re-enacts some of this humiliating tryst in the shower – a rehearsal, perhaps, before turning on the camera.

Both Dunham and Aura are always ready to make the private public – but only one of them is capable of reaching an audience of more than “400 hits”. Aura is the creation of a young filmmaker of exceptional drive and prolificacy; like most of Dunham’s onscreen analogues, she is (as the director explained in a profile in *The New Yorker* in 2010) “like me, minus a certain kind of awareness. She is one step behind where I’m at, at any given moment.”

Among *Tiny Furniture*’s most influential – and surprising – fans is Judd Apatow, who is the executive producer of Dunham’s upcoming HBO series *Girls*, which follows a group of women just out of college navigating work and romance in New York City (an age group in between the characters of *Gossip Girl* and *Sex and the City*, as Dunham noted recently). The results of this latest project will hopefully be as furtively entertaining and revealing as reading the pages of someone’s pinched diary.

■ *‘Tiny Furniture’ is released on 30 March, and is reviewed on page 79*



**LOFT GENERATION**  
When Aura (Lena Dunham, all pics) returns to her NYC home from college, it creates tension with her photographer mother (Laurie Simmons, all pics) and young sister (Grace Dunham, left centre)



# ACT OF FAITH

*In the summer of 1954, **Jan Wahl** was a young American student on a Fulbright scholarship to the University of Copenhagen when he had the chance to spend some time with the Danish director Carl Theodor Dreyer. The film Dreyer was shooting that summer was 'Ordet' ('The Word'), subsequently acclaimed as one of the director's greatest – and one of the most moving explorations of faith in all cinema. Wahl's transcriptions of his conversations with Dreyer form the basis of a newly published memoir, of which this is an edited extract*

**P**eople in Copenhagen have a way of celebrating spring and the sun. They enter Tivoli Gardens as soon as the sun breaks through the grey clouds, sit at one of the outdoor cafés and order Tuborg beer with cold shrimp on buttered bread. Around this time also, forests filled with beech trees burst into bloom. Wood anemones and green things galore spread out over soft, velvety grass. Swans swim in the moats. The population begins to move out into the countryside. On the Sound, sailboats appear, and red-capped students with rucksacks and cameras pedal the roads. The old copper roof atop Elsinore Castle shines almost clear across the water to Sweden. Little children watch the skies for storks returning from Africa. Winter's lid has been removed; Danish hearts are buoyant.

It was in such favourable weather in 1954 that Dreyer was about to commence a new feature film, his first in nearly a decade and his first in his own small country since *Day of Wrath* (1943), which was made during the Nazi occupation in World War II.

The previous November, someone I knew had glimpsed Dreyer at one of the fish restaurants along the canal in Copenhagen the evening before

he was to fly to London to seek backing from J. Arthur Rank for the biggest project of his career. Dreyer was expecting to do a film on the life of Jesus, and had already spent years on the manuscript and on planning, to the last detail, just what he needed. But he returned unsuccessful.

Herr Dreyer said that after World War II, producers in several countries urged him to come and start a film – but because of recent political history, he had no desire to do it. “When you have seen someone try to crush your country,” he declared, “you cannot forget in a year or so.”

Fortunately, he was not destined to suffer for his probity. At last the Danish government awarded him – as an international artist and a faithful Dane – the directorship of the Dagmar Theatre, one of the country's most splendid moving-picture theatres. Under Dreyer's guidance, the Dagmar showed the public Jean Renoir's *The River*, John Huston's *Moulin Rouge*, the Japanese *Rashomon* and *Gate of Hell*, and the American *The Little Fugitive* and *Carmen Jones*.

After November of 1953, there were rumours printed in the newspapers saying that Dreyer might do a new film, a Danish one. Many didn't believe it. Knowing him to be uncompromising, they felt he would make no film until he found the means to begin his Jesus project. Why should

he, it seemed on the spur of the moment, give up *The Life of Jesus*?

In the early spring of 1954, the headlines declared the film was to be *Ordet* (*The Word*), from the mystical play by the martyred poet-vicar Kaj Munk.

Two years before I came to Denmark I had written to Dreyer, asking if he could help me secure a print of [Dreyer's 1932 film] *Vampyr*, which he did. I sent him a message that I was now enrolled at the university and was studying film courtesy of the Danish Film Museum.

In June, Dreyer telephoned to say that he and his wife were renting a summer place at Rungsted, a small town on the coast between Copenhagen and Elsinore. Would I care to come up for tea and discuss the new film.

Without hesitation, I replied that I could leave at once.

## June 1954

Herr Dreyer sat with me in the parlour.

“When I first saw *Ordet* performed, I wrote to Kaj Munk, asking if he would care to sell the rights. He replied, humorously, yes, he'd sell – for 250,000 kroner. So I have had to wait until the circumstances were right.

“In a way, this will be an ‘in-between’ experi- ➡



**IMITATION OF CHRIST**  
In 'Ordet' by Carl Theodor Dreyer, opposite, Johannes (Preben Lerdorff, standing) tries to revive Inger (Birgitte Federspiel), the dead wife of his brother Mikkel (Emil Hass Christensen)









**HEAD OF THE TABLE**  
Henrik Malberg, centre,  
as old Borgen in 'Ordet',  
and, opposite, with  
Dreyer, left, and co-star  
Emil Hass Christensen

ence for me. I want to see how people will react to a miracle, since the Christ film will be full of them. I think this will help prepare audiences for seeing him, too, on the screen. The opening of the Book of the Evangelist says: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.'

"You will recall that John, when he was not preaching, was sometimes mistaken for Jesus. In Danish, John is called Johannes. Munk's story in *Ordet* tells of a divinity student who, in that period of intense study just before examinations, has suffered a mental collapse. He thereupon assumes the identity of Jesus.

"Consequently, this young man, named Johannes, thinks he can work miracles. He tries to raise a young woman in his family from the dead – as Jesus had spoken unto the corpse of the daughter of Jairus. 'Talitha cumi: I say unto thee, arise.' His attempt fails. Johannes forgot to ask God for the power. It comes as a great shock to him.

"His sane mind is restored to him, young Inger yet in her coffin. With a pure mind, he asks again for a miracle to occur: for her to wake. It is a question of faith. Johannes still believes. The girl comes alive and sits bolt upright in her coffin."

At the conclusion of this narrative, we sat for a moment in silence. Perhaps it was an effect from the light, but while he was speaking, his enthusiasm grew. The faint blue colour in Dreyer's eyes seemed to leave altogether; they became an intense white, as if you could see through to the fire-hot vision burning in his head.

"This is a theme," he said quietly, "that suits me – Faith's triumph in the skeptical 20th century over Science and Rationalism."

### July 1954

[The following month, Wahl was invited to join Dreyer during the shoot in Vedersø, a remote village in Jutland where Munk – the local pastor – wrote and set his play. Shooting was frequently delayed by bad weather.]

Before lunch, we took a walk over the dunes to the North Sea, which crashed upon the shore some hundred yards behind the hotel. Walls of concrete helped keep the protective dunes from blowing away. There were several large pillboxes left as souvenirs from the Nazi occupation.

"Imagine," said Dreyer, "a strong, loving father

like old Borgen who is disappointed by his three sons. The oldest, Mikkel, though he has a fine wife, Inger, and two small daughters, lacks the faith of the father. The youngest, Anders, has fallen in love with Anne, daughter of Peter Tailor – that is a crushing blow to the old man. And Johannes, the other son, in whom he had the highest hopes, for he shared his father's belief, has become deranged. Old Borgen, the Glad Christian himself, becomes filled with doubt."

He continued: "From the character of the man Johannes, the film will find its true style. I must pour into *Ordet* an atmosphere in which a miracle is possible, keeping it, meantime, in touch with the Everyday. Life – *life* must be the watchword."

Far out on the water we saw two fishing boats battling the waves. Dreyer climbed a dune. Like spilled gold, a patch of sunshine lit a distant rye field; the sky was still lowering. The gold was suddenly shut out, and we headed back to the hotel.

Dreyer's company occupied three full sides at the simple, long board tables of the hotel dining room. An enlarged photograph of Kaj Munk hung on the wall. Preben Lerdorf, who had played the son Martin in *Day of Wrath* and would now play Johannes, entered and shook hands. He was a startling image of the bearded Christ as we know Him in paintings. He wore rough boots and a thick wool pullover.

I was placed at Dreyer's left; on the other side sat the grand old actor from the Royal Theatre, Henrik Malberg, now in his eighties [who was cast in the role of old Borgen].

Malberg leaned forward to pass me sardines from Portugal. "These are real jewels," he declared. "But the greatest jewel for me you can't guess. Kaj Munk wrote *Ordet* with me in mind for the part of Borgen. However, the Royal Theatre, to which I was under contract, turned down the play on the

**'This is a theme that suits me – Faith's triumph in the skeptical 20th century over Rationalism'**

grounds that *Ordet* demands an intimate audience, and the Royal Theatre seats 1600. When a small, intimate theatre in Copenhagen agreed to do the play, the Royal Theatre would not release me. To this day I have been unhappy over the affair; I felt cheated and regard this opportunity of playing Borgen as a personal triumph. So we must celebrate. Please have one of my sardines!"

I took it upon myself to mention the Gustaf Molander version [of *Ordet*, made in 1943]. Dreyer's only comment was, turning in the direction of the North Sea and the dunes: "This is what we in Denmark missed in it. He made *Ordet* a Swedish morality play instead of catching Kaj Munk's spirit."

Soon the table, which had been laden with thin slices of black bread and white bread, pilsner beer and milk, butter, fish, liver paste, chicken, ham, cheese, marmalade and jam, was cleared to make way for heaping dishes of strawberries with cream, followed by coffee.

Malberg brought out a box of Havana cigars, presenting it to Dreyer, making a mock bow. "We are so happy to work with you, Herr Dreyer," he said, clasping his hand – no longer in jest but in real devotion – "that I had to make this little speech to let you know we have faith, no matter what the weather."

Out of the window, a far hill became flooded with light at that moment. The company burst into cheerful cries, rose up from their seats and pressed against the glass. The hill flickered, then went dark. Everybody rushed outside to look for signs of change.

Impatiently, we waited for the radio forecast, sent over the loudspeaker in the dining hall. "It will rain again tonight, in particular in the western parts of Jutland," Dreyer repeated when the radio was shut off. He lit a cigar for Malberg, testing his own. "Well, we must have more coffee, I beseech you," he told a waitress.

He smiled, turning to me. "There is something about coffee that soothes the Danes," he said, "and puts them in touch with God. We become philosophical about it. Coffee is the mainstay in Jutland in particular; the farmers like it with a little cognac. On Sundays they gather in each other's homes to discuss religion – sometimes to read poetry and plays.





"The play *Ordet* begins," he continued, "with a scene in which the family takes coffee. It is natural for them to sit with their coffee and troubles. That is perfect for the troubles. That is perfect for the stage, made to order. However, in a film you must show – instead of having the family talk about Johannes, I make the action direct.

"The family wakes up in the night; Johannes is missing, having got out of bed and gone through the door. His father, old Borgen, and his brothers Mikkel and Anders follow him over the dunes. On a hill in the moor Johannes gives a sermon to an imaginary crowd; his father and brothers strain their ears to listen. I think this is a natural beginning, too.

"I took up this change with Fru Munk; I have checked with her for everything, seeking approval. Because I want to be fair to Kaj Munk's intentions. The meaning must be unchanged – I must keep pure the flavour of the original, just as I, from the pages of Sheridan LeFanu, was inspired to make *Vampyr*."

The afternoon was grey and gloomy, yet Dreyer calmly went on. "You must revitalise a work when you give it a different form. You cannot merely try to copy. You must try to give it full value, shedding new light. Think of *Don Quixote*. Gustave Doré, Daumier and Cruikshank all illustrated it, sticking to its heart but each time mining something fresh. Richard Strauss wrote one of his very best tone poems, and Pabst made a film with songs. All these works were justified; none of them cheated Cervantes."

He puffed thoughtfully upon his cigar. "You know, Chaplin once was going to do a film on the life of Napoléon, with the Spanish singer Raquel Meller as Joséphine." He pronounced both names in the French manner.

"But he learned some big American company was about to release the 'biography' by Abel Gance; he quit the project. Don't you think? It would have been a wonderful chance for Chaplin. Instead of a Prometheus leading massed armies downhill, he would have shown the inner man."

His eyes rested briefly on the darkening sky. "So I am making *Ordet* by feeling that it is my film but Munk's play. I am positive the two are compatible. Some people warn me against trying Munk's masterpiece. I must work hard to satisfy

them. That means when you come down to it, I must do it as I see fit.

"This bad weather will pass. The last gate will open. Once these outdoor scenes are finished, we will not be hampered in the studio, though any delay here makes us suffer, since the contracts, every one, run only through the first of October. The Danish summer of 1952 was very rainy; we could not foresee this one would be as bad. Herr Malberg was telling me that in his youth in the 1890s there was a year like this – heavy and wet."

Henrik Malberg got up from his chair. "I'll go back to bed," he decided, "until there is more coffee. Or until the sun comes out. That is one way to beat dismal days." He shuffled out, puffing on the stub of his cigar.

Dreyer walked me out to the driveway. He was about to meet Anne (Gerda Nielsen) and Anders (Cay Kristiansen) to discuss the love scenes. Both were young schoolteachers, and neither had acted in films before. He did not seem to consider their lack of experience a handicap.

I asked how it would turn out in the dialogue scenes for them. "It will be hard for all of us," Dreyer replied, "though not in the way that you might think. You see, no one has ever been able to make a sound film here in Jutland until now. The wind whips into the microphone, ruining the track. This is another obstacle to be passed. We must hope for success.

"Anne and Anders will grow into their scene, then we will wait for our chance. This is the kind of scene that Munk's theatre structure cannot allow but is right for the film. We do not always use the same kind of scenes."

He explained: "For instance, I eliminated the story of Johannes's fiancée, called Agatha by Kaj Munk. Munk explains Johannes's madness partly by means of saying he collapsed after she was struck by a car while trying to save his life. The couple had just attended a play in which someone is brought to life by a miracle. Johannes, a theological student, while pondering the theme, steps into the path of the car.

"When Agatha lies in her coffin, Johannes is found trying to urge her up, imploring for a miracle. He faints and, upon coming to, assumes the identity of Jesus Christ. At the end, when Johannes is confronted with Mikkel's wife

Inger, who died in childbirth and is lying in her coffin, his mind returns to the moment when it was led astray.

"I simplified this for the sake of the film. Agatha was not necessary. You have to strip all things to their essentials. Johannes, according to the film, is a very enthusiastic theological student who has a nervous collapse. In clinical studies, such a case is very common. His concentration has developed to the point where he is under the delusion that he himself is the Lord Jesus.

"The young man Johannes, like everyone at the farm Borgensgaard, carries much love for Mikkel's wife and, believing he is the Christ, supposes himself to have the power of miracles; so with all his strength he tries to exercise this power. It fails; he does not possess the means and, in this second collapse, realises he is not Jesus Christ.

"In both cases, the film and the play, the true miracle occurs after Johannes has regained his senses. Being then a sane man, not of impure mind, he has faith in the life-giving Word, as does Inger's little daughter. Together they ask God to release Inger from death; that is when the miracle comes.

"*Ordet* can be made in only one manner: by believing."

We stepped onto the hotel porch quickly to get shelter. And Dreyer continued, oblivious to the immediate wind and weather: "Kaj Munk described John the Baptist as being a man who was not extremely cautious, a man who spoke out the truth no matter the cost. In the end, the Spirit of God outweighs even Blood and Truth. Munk shouted accusations against the Germans, just as the Baptist had told the truth about King Herod.

"Well, after the New Year 1944, at last the Nazis took Munk away from his wife and five children; when we return to Copenhagen on the road to Ringkøbing toward Silkeborg, you will see where his murdered body was thrown in a ditch. A stone cross was erected there, and Danes lay fresh flowers at the spot every day."

■ *'Carl Theodor Dreyer and Ordet: My Summer with the Danish Filmmaker' by Jan Wahl is published this month by the University Press of Kentucky. 'Ordet' is rereleased on 9 March and plays in an extended run at BFI Southbank, London as part of a Dreyer season until 23 March*



*In the course of six extraordinary features, the Dardenne brothers have made a bleak industrial town in Belgium a microcosm of all human life.* **By Jonathan Romney**

# LA COMEDIE HUMAINE

**A**t one point in the journals of filmmaker Luc Dardenne, he imagines himself and his brother Jean-Pierre being asked why they make the films they do. He answers, “We do what we know how to.” It’s a problem for any filmmaker: do you keep doing what you know how to, or do you risk working outside your expertise – and possibly failing? Or alternatively, do you work inside the limits of what you know, but dig ever deeper within the parameters offered by that knowledge?

On the evidence of six features – starting with what might be called their ‘real’ first film, *La Promesse* (1996) – Belgium’s Dardenne brothers have chosen the third option, producing a series of markedly different variations on a set of possibilities that define their filmmaking – possibilities that are variously geographic, aesthetic, economic, political and personal. Those are, respectively: their choice of the Belgian industrial town of Seraing as location and setting; the belief in an urgent, spare, hands-on form of realism; a commitment to small budgets as a way of achieving that realism; a fascination with dramas of the socially excluded and disadvantaged; and finally, the fact that they are the Dardennes, brothers working together with shared interests, attitudes, abilities and humours.

Viewers have come to cherish the consistency that marks the Dardennes’ oeuvre, together with their enduring commitment to testing that consistency – to making their language elastic, their fictions continually surprising. It’s true that we prefer to see some filmmakers stepping out of their safety zone, and others conforming to type. But there’s nothing complacent in the way the Dardennes stick to their last (to use an appropriately artisanal term), and I can’t imagine why we’d want to see them doing something markedly out of character. That said, if they ever made the project they once speculated about, a realistic life of Jesus filmed in Israel, who wouldn’t be curious?

The Dardennes’ new film *The Kid with a Bike* (*Le Gamin au vélo*) is quintessentially recognisable, and yet at the same time fundamentally different. It has some familiar elements: Seraing; the presence of actors Jérémie Renier and (fleetingly)

Olivier Gourmet; a heart-stoppingly ambivalent conclusion; and an isolated protagonist (a boy named Cyril, played by the remarkable Thomas Doret) battling furiously for a place in the world.

Yet *The Kid with a Bike* is something new for the Dardennes: an unusually bright film – the first they have shot in summer – exploring spacious suburbs rather than dreary city streets. The film is also uncharacteristically upbeat, as suggested by the poster image of a boy and a young woman cycling side by side on a sunny day. And it is the first Dardennes film to feature a full-blown star: Belgian actress Cécile de France, best known in the UK for Xavier Giannoli’s *The Singer* and Clint Eastwood’s *Hereafter*. De France fits perfectly into the Dardennes’ world – and crucially, into its rhythms – as Samantha, a single woman who runs her own hair salon. By chance, Samantha encounters Cyril, living in a care home since being abandoned by his feckless young father (Renier). Out of a no-nonsense compassion that the film never needs to explain, Samantha bonds with Cyril, offering him a home and a connection to the world.

So *The Kid with a Bike* is very recognisably a Dardennes film. But what makes the brothers the filmmakers they are, and when did they become those filmmakers? From the evidence of their work – and from their own comments – it’s clear that it happened with their third fiction feature *La Promesse*, in which they began again after two false starts (1986’s *Falsch* and 1992’s *Je pense à vous*). Although they’d already explored some of the same themes in the earlier films, *La Promesse* is the first work in which their signature is apparent. But the precise moment at which they became the Dardennes is, I’d argue, that film’s closing shot.

In *La Promesse*, teenage Igor (Renier) works with his father Roger (Gourmet), a slum landlord and merciless exploiter of illegal immigrants. When an African, Amidou, is killed on Roger’s building site, Igor helps hide the body and keep the death a secret from Amidou’s wife Asitta (Asitta Ouédraogo). But the dying man has made Igor promise to look after his wife and child, and the boy keeps his word. Fulfilling his moral bond doesn’t itself complete Igor’s redemption, however; that possibility is apparent only in the final shot when Igor, at a railway station, finally tells Asitta that Amidou is dead. He says it quietly; the two

**IN TANDEM**  
‘The Kid with a Bike’, right, is the most upbeat film to date from Belgium’s filmmaking brothers Jean-Pierre, top left, and Luc Dardenne







## The Dardenne brothers The Kid with a Bike



**STEP BY STEP**  
After their unsuccessful second feature 'Je pense à vous,' far left, the Dardennes found their mature style with 'La Promesse,' left, followed by 'The Son,' far right, and 'The Child,' right

◀ silently exchange looks; then Igor follows as Asitta walks away from the camera, and down a long corridor. Cut to end credits.

It's in this two-minute shot that the Dardennes properly become the Dardennes. Everything is here: the play of the camera's distance and extreme proximity; the spare, utterly to-the-point dialogue; the uncertainty around the characters' fates; and yet the sense that some conclusion has been reached – not resolution as such, but at least the possibility of redemption and, perhaps more importantly, reparation. In fact I'd argue that the Dardennes' stories are typically about the question of damage reparable and irreparable. It's a theme that perhaps emerges most overtly in *The Child* (*L'Enfant*, 2005), where an irresponsible young father sells his baby for adoption. He then returns the money and promptly gets the baby back – but his debt remains as yet unpaid, both to the child-trading gang and, more crucially, to the baby's mother.

The films' other key theme is will. Screenwriting manuals repeatedly tell us that the vital question in any narrative should be, 'What does the protagonist want?' A character must have a goal, and be prepared to do anything to achieve it. Because of its routine abuse in Hollywood, this tenet has become somewhat disreputable; in art cinema, what a person wants or does is often less important than the way the world acts on him or her – and indeed such cinema often focuses on people's inability to control their own destiny.

But the Dardennes have reclaimed the idea of will, investing it with a ferocious narrative energy. For the brothers, will propels the world; it's the only thing that allows their characters to survive in a hostile universe. This irreducible dynamism is sometimes visible from the very first moments of a film. Take the kinetic start of *Rosetta* (1999), the camera chasing down corridors after the young heroine (Emilie Dequenne) as she rushes to protest about the loss of her job; it sets the tone for the story of a character who, Luc Dardenne has said, is permanently "in a state of war". *The Kid with a Bike* begins with Cyril trying to phone his absent father for the umpteenth time; as usual he's getting a disconnected signal, but he won't take its electronic no for an answer or let the phone be prised from his hand. In both cases, the handheld camera doesn't merely observe the action, but is caught up in it, like a bystander thrown into a bar-room fight.

### Return to zero

Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne began making films in 1974, working in documentary for the first decade of their careers. (Like most of their admirers, I've never seen their documentaries.) Based in Liège, they have long concentrated on the population of neighbouring Seraing – a steel town with a strong history of labour activity, which fell into decline from the 1970s on, leading to chronic deprivation. The brothers gave up documentary, they said, because they were increasingly frustrated by the resistance of people and things to the camera. Instead they turned to fiction with two little-seen features.

*Falsch* (1986) is an overtly theatrical adaptation of a play by René Kalisky about a Jewish family destroyed by the Nazis; staged at a deserted airport, it's barely watchable and terribly 1980s, like Fassbinder working under the lurid umbrella of the French *cinéma du look*. Their next film *Je pense à vous* (*You're on My Mind*, 1992) – co-written with Resnais/Truffaut associate Jean Gruault – is closer to the Dardennes we know, but not yet close enough. It's about a young Seraing couple torn apart when a steel mill closes. The husband goes AWOL, subsiding into boozy vagabondage, then redeeming himself by defending a fellow worker from an exploitative boss. Finally he is reunited with his wife and young son in an overtly feelgood crane shot that frames the trio among the vivid pomp of the Seraing carnival.

The film is not good – partly because of awkwardly melodramatic execution, partly because of insipid leads, partly because the handsome photography is surplus to dramatic requirements. (The brothers once told me that they were terrified of its prestigious DP Yorgos Arvanitis, famed for his work with Theo Angelopoulos.) In fact, even before the film screened at festivals, the Dardennes knew it was a dud – and took it as a cue to rethink their act from scratch.

In 2005 Luc Dardenne published a fascinating

**The Dardennes' cinema clearly isn't without style, but it's stripped of false polish, of all superfluity**

book, *Au dos de nos images: 1991-2005* (*On the Back of Our Images* – on their flipside, as it were), a journal of thoughts on the duo's theory and practice. (Although Luc did the writing, he specified that he was voicing the opinions and attitudes of both brothers.) The book is an extraordinarily revealing picture of filmmakers musing hyperlucidly on what they do and why. Its seriousness and philosophical density might surprise people who are used to the affable brothers' matter-of-fact, sometimes clownish tone in interviews, or those who regard them as sleeves-rolled-up technicians of the prosaic. What emerges above all is the searching intensity with which the Dardennes, after *Je pense à vous*, set out to fundamentally re-evaluate not just their practice but their very understanding of cinema.

Here the brothers decide to aim for a stripped-down cinema, free of the impurities and compromises of traditional narrative film. This is partly a necessity in order to carry on as independent filmmakers in Belgium, far from the distracting arena of the international movie business: "To live in a little country like ours. Not to frequent the milieu of cinema. The necessary isolation." (All translations from the book are mine.) It's also a matter of the ethical, political and humanist dimensions of filmmaking: "To look at how to be human, not in general, but in the concrete extreme situations constructed by society today." As for the form that inquiry should take: "A cinema without style. All style is a caricature, a self-resemblance, a destiny, a mummification, a victory for the necrophile."

The Dardennes' cinema clearly isn't without style, but it's stripped of false polish, of all superfluity. Luc identifies "the one question that contains all the others: *where to put the camera?*" That is to say: what do I show? That's to say: what do I hide? Hiding is without doubt the most essential thing."

Hiding – or at least, revealing with rigorous selectiveness – is a key Dardenne technique. It underlies the brothers' economical, sometimes elliptical storytelling: in *The Son* (*Le Fils*, 2002), the delayed revelation that the apprentice Francis had killed Olivier's son; or the audacious jump in *The Silence of Lorna* (*Le Silence de Lorna*, 2008) in which it's abruptly revealed, from one shot to the next, that heroin addict Claudy (Renier) has died. Hiding is essential to the shooting style of *Rosetta*





BY STILLAS, POSTERS AND DESIGNS (4)

and *The Son*, in which the camera stays tight on the characters' bodies, showing only those parts of the world around them that they, in their obsessive non-stop motion, are conscious of at that very moment. Look at the staging of the desperate scenes in *The Child*, as Bruno (Renier again) first surrenders then retrieves baby Jimmy, in an empty flat and a garage respectively, while the baby traders remain unseen presences behind the walls.

You could say that every good filmmaker hides all but the essential. But the failure of *Je pense à vous* lets us see clearly what the non-essential is for the Dardennes: they don't need the big backdrop behind the central nugget of drama. That film gave us family celebrations, the entire community of steelworkers, a whole city making merry in the final shot – but it's all surplus to a film that emerges from a key moment of collapse in Seraing's social structure. The subsequent films offer a stripped-down picture of the town after the fall depicted in *Je pense à vous*. They're set in an already 'broken Belgium', if you like, among the ruins of which individuals must struggle alone. Incidentally, the system as such – the state – isn't depicted as corrupt or damaged (police, hospital staff, care-home workers, etc. are all depicted as humane, competent figures), but simply as inadequate to manage a world in which people routinely exploit, betray or do violence to each other.

Those determined to survive do so by holding tight to objects, *trucs* or accessories that channel their characters' obsessions, attach them to the world or define them bodily: for example, the sturdy work belt worn by Olivier (Gourmet) in *The Son*, which seems to be all that keeps him from physically exploding; or the gas container which Rosetta must carry, at all costs, in the final sequence of her story; or the various stashes of money or possessions that characters, from film to film, keep buried in holes in the ground. And then there are the vehicles: the motorbike ridden by Igor in *La Promesse*, which later becomes Bruno's bike in *The Child* – his mode of escape, as opposed to the pram, which is a burden he must accept. In the new film, Cyril's bike not only offers freedom, a chance to vent his endless dynamism; it represents a bond with the father who gave it to him (and then sold it behind his back). The bike also brings danger: it's constantly being stolen, which gets Cyril into fights.

## Continuity

We know that the consistency of the Dardennes' work comes partly from their continued collaboration (since *La Promesse*) with a regular crew: DP Alain Marcoen, camera operator Benoît Dervaux, editor Marie-Hélène Dozo, production designer Igor Gabriel et al. There's also a consistency in the casting. Olivier Gourmet appears repeatedly, from being constantly visible in *The Son* to playing a tiny cameo in *The Kid with a Bike*. In fact *The Son* was entirely built around Gourmet, a starting-point before the brothers even had a story; his looming physical presence, together with the athletic skills and physical precision he acquired to play carpenter Olivier, is a vital part of the film's dynamism. Conversely, it wasn't until they had written *The Child* that the brothers thought of casting Jérémie Renier from *La Promesse*; he has since played key roles in *The Silence of Lorna* and *The Kid with a Bike*. Don't forget Fabrizio Rongione, a regular supporting player who has incidentally functioned as a measure of time's passing: he has aged from the perplexed youth Riquet in *Rosetta* to a middle-aged newsagent in *The Kid with a Bike*.

This repertory casting makes the Dardennes' dramas something other than they initially appeared to be. Continuing to shoot in Seraing (and in Liège for *Lorna*), the Dardennes have mined numerous stories from the same restricted, seemingly unpromising, totally unglamorous locale. The brothers have said that the advantage of working in Seraing is that they immediately know who their characters are, and where they are from. But they also see their characters as autonomous beings that their films need to investigate. In his book, Luc describes Rosetta as someone who exists before the first shot of the film and will exist after the closing one: "As if she was a figure in a documentary, existing outside the fact of being filmed by our camera."

It was possible to think that on first seeing *La Promesse* and *Rosetta*. But the reappearance of Gourmet, Renier and Rongione gradually begins to change everything. As they have become familiar screen faces, in the brothers' work and elsewhere, their presence has come to signal the overtly filmic dimension of the Dardennes' stories. It has become a trademark, a sign that we are watching a Dardennes film and no one else's – that we are inhabiting their fictional universe.

This might seem to contradict Luc's notion of

filming an autonomous reality; but the tension between this view and the sense of an enclosed fictional universe actually fuels the vibrancy of the Dardenne cycle. By recasting actors, they embrace the fact that they are making fictions, along with fiction's attendant repetitions and – through them – the emergence of key themes. Bike-riding Igor in *La Promesse* grows up, figuratively speaking, to become bike-riding Bruno in *The Child*, also played by Jérémie Renier – and Cyril, *le gamin*, is their latest incarnation.

Igor and Cyril both have bad fathers – respectively, Roger (Gourmet) and Guy (Renier again) – and there but for the grace of God goes Bruno, saved in *The Child* from becoming a callous Guy, or from meeting the wretched fate of drug-ravaged Claudy in *Lorna*. Far from being a documentary mirror reflecting and recording individual cases of Seraing life as they present themselves, the Dardennes' oeuvre has become a hall of mirrors, with themes and images multiplying in a process of continued enrichment.

*The Kid with a Bike* brings new inflection to this world. The brothers have described the film as a fairytale, pointing out its newly simplified terms of reference: Samantha being a straightforward, uncontradictory character, Wes (the older boy Cyril tries to please by committing a robbery) an outright villain. But *The Kid* reminded me less of a fairytale than of *Oliver Twist*: an abandoned child taken in by a benefactor, seduced by a criminal, given the chance to redeem himself but, at a crucial moment, betrayed by the respectable world.

The Dardennes don't look directly at the world, any more than other fiction filmmakers do; as Luc's journal makes clear with its mentions of Shakespeare, Proust, Sartre, René Char et al (not to mention a host of filmmakers, and the Bible), the duo's imagination is richly mediated by cultural references. It may be actors rather than characters who recur in their films, but even so, Seraing – which is both a real and an imaginary place – has become the fertile ground for the brothers' very own *Comédie humaine*, just as Paris was for Balzac's. It's because of their imagination as readers and dreamers, rather than quasi-documentarians, that we can say of their Seraing: all human life is here.

■ *'The Kid with a Bike'* is released on 23 March, and is reviewed on page 70



# LIGHT MY FIRE

As *S&S* counts down to the September issue's once-a-decade poll to find the Greatest Film of All Time, French critic **Nicole Brenez** makes the case for one of the key revolutionary activist films of the 1960s, 'The Hour of the Furnaces'

## POLL COUNTDOWN

No.5

**M**ade in Argentina in 1968, *The Hour of the Furnaces* (*La hora de los hornos*) is the film that established the paradigm of revolutionary activist cinema. "For the first time," said one of its writers, Octavio Getino, "we demonstrated that it was possible to produce and distribute a film in a non-liberated country with the specific aim of contributing to the political process of liberation." The film is not just an act of courage, it's also a formal synthesis, a theoretical essay and the origin of several contemporary image practices.

Working from within the Cine Liberación Group they formed with fellow documentarian Gerardo Vallejo, Getino and director Fernando Solanas made a 208-minute film divided into two parts (88 and 120 minutes) and three sections: *Notes and Testimonies on Neocolonialism, Violence and Liberation* (Part I/section 1); *Act for Liberation* (Part II/section 2); and *Violence and Liberation* (Part II/section 3). Part II mainly consists of advocacy for the Argentinian politician Juan Péron and therefore does not concern us here. This article focuses entirely on Part I, the part that develops a critical

analysis of the situation in the Latin American continent during the 1960s.

*The Hour of the Furnaces: Notes and Testimonies on Neocolonialism, Violence and Liberation* is a didactic essay organised into 14 chapters: 'Introduction'; 1) 'The History'; 2) 'The Country'; 3) 'Daily Violence'; 4) 'The Port City'; 5) 'The Oligarchy'; 6) 'The System'; 7) 'Political Violence'; 8) 'Neoracism'; 9) 'Dependence'; 10) 'Cultural Violence'; 11) 'Models'; 12) 'Ideological Welfare'; 13) 'The Choice'. In other words, the film conducts a comprehensive analysis of the history, geography, economy, sociology, ideology, culture, religion and daily life of Latin America. Each dimension and source of oppression is documented and pondered, as is each link between determinations and their consequences.

Headlines, captions and title cards punctuate the film like riffs in a musical composition. The quotations are from leaders of liberation struggles and inspirational figures from world history, such as the 19th-century Cuban revolutionary José Martí (the phrase "hour of the furnaces" is his), the radical activist Raúl Scalabrini Ortiz (Argentina), Che Guevara (Argentina/Cuba), Frantz Fanon (Martinique/Algeria) and Aimé Césaire (Martinique), among others. But perhaps the major structuring influence is the Peruvian revolutionary poet, philosopher and political leader José Carlos Mariátegui (1894-1930), whose analysis of Peru's situation was the first systematic attempt to adapt Marxist concepts and methodology to a Latin American context. The chapter headings of his *Seven Interpretive Essays on Peruvian Reality* (1928) prefigure the film's conceptual framework: 'The Economic Factor in Peruvian History', 'Colonial Economy', 'Regionalism and Centralism', 'The Land Problem', 'The Indian Problem', 'The Religious Factor' and 'The Literature of the Colony'.

The film was made clandestinely under a dictatorship, and signed by the Cine Liberación Group. Each screening was a risk and created a "liberated space, a decolonised territory" (in Getino's words), within which the film could be stopped for as long as necessary to allow discussions and debates (hence the compartmentalised structure). Argentinian scholar Mariano Mestman recalls that several screenings lead to military confrontations. To attend a screening was in itself a political act, transforming spectators into responsible historical subjects, not because they did or did not agree with the content of the film, but by virtue of the very decision to attend, despite the threat.

A demonstration and a lesson, *The Hour of the Furnaces* imports into cinema the affirmative aesthetics of the written political treatise. A collective ideal informs the whole film. It anticipates a liberated time. It's not the product of a single voice but of a chorus of poems (Martí, Césaire), mani-

festos (Fanon, Guevara, Castro, Juan José Hernández Arregui) and films (by Fernando Birri, Joris Ivens, Nemesio Juárez). It conjoins the powers of didacticism, poetry and *agogy* (the agogic qualities of a work concern its rhythmic, sensible, physical properties – a notion suggested by the French aesthetician Etienne Souriau). Stylistically, the film uses all possible audiovisual techniques, from flicker to contemplative sequence shots (for instance, the final three-minute shot that reproduces a picture of the dead Che Guevara's face with his eyes wide open), from collage to direct cinema, from blank screen to animated effects, from the rigours of the blackboard to the hallucinogenic properties of the fish-eye, from classical music to anglophone pop hits. Cinema is an arsenal and here all its weapons are unsheathed.

The film's elegant radicalism inspired many later visual essayists such as Chris Marker, the Dziga Vertov Group, the Cinéthique Group, Patricio Guzmán, Alexander Kluge and films such as *The Spiral* (1975) made by Armand Mattelart, Jacqueline Meppiel and Valérie Mayoux (with the help of Chris Marker). In fact the analysis of conditions in Chile found in *The Spiral* and Guzmán's *The Battle of Chile* (1977) can be considered fourth and fifth chapters of *The Hour of the Furnaces*.

## A great tradition

The visual economic-political treatise is an important and rare form in cinema, one grounded in the theatrical agitprop tradition. Its historical highlights include Eisenstein's *Strike* (1925), Cavalcanti's *Rien que les heures* (1926), Dziga Vertov's *The Sixth Part of the World* (1926), René Vautier's *Afrique 50* (1950), the Dziga Vertov Group's *British Sounds*, *Pravda* and *Struggles in Italy* (all 1969), Santiago Alvarez's *Stone upon Stone* (1970), *I'm a Son of America... And I'm Indebted to It* (1972), Raymundo Gleyzer and Cine de la Base's *Mexico: The Frozen Revolution* (1970), L.A. Newsreel's *Repression* (1970), the Cinéthique Group's *A Whole Program* (1976), Vautier, Brigitte Criton and Buana Kabue's *Frontline* (1976), Robert Kramer's *Scenes from the Class Struggle in Portugal* (1977) and Straub/Huillet's *Too Early, Too Late* (1982). The translation of an economic-political analysis into images remains a fascinating source of cinematic reinvention. In such a brilliant tradition, *The Hour of the Furnaces*

**A collective ideal informs the whole film. It's not the product of a single voice but of a chorus of manifestos**





BEI STILL, POSTERS AND DESIGNS (O)

## UNFLINCHING GAZE

The last three minutes of the film hold on a still photograph of the face of the dead Che Guevara

stands out for its powerful balance between its strong literary structure and its many audiovisual innovations. These establish the film as a central reference for cinematic activism.

Such films give us the tools with which to understand, discuss and transform a historical situation: concepts, (neocolonialism, imperialism, class struggle), logics (how to relate one phenomenon to another, for example the arts to neocolonialism, religion to the economy, the working day to the nature of leisure) and proposals (slogans about revolution). In the context of the political responsibilities of culture and of film itself, *The Hour of the Furnaces* forms an indivisible diptych with Solanas and Getino's written essay *Towards a Third Cinema: Notes and Experiences for the Development of a Cinema of Liberation in the Third World* (1969). This text can be seen as a genesis, a generalisation and an extension of the film.

*Towards a Third Cinema* defines a triad that generates many new questions: industrial cinema (the first cinema); auteur cinema (the second cinema, an alibi and safety valve for the existing

system); and guerrilla cinema (the third cinema, contesting the other cinemas and the world order they support, acting as the cinematic insurgent patrol in the armies of liberation fighting colonialism and imperialism). Third Cinema reinvented each constitutive element of film practice: production, organisation, aesthetics, art and audience. This manifesto emphasises the unfinished dimension of *The Hour of the Furnaces*: "Until now, we have put forward practical proposals but only loose ideas – just a sketch of the hypotheses born out of our first film *The Hour of the Furnaces*. We therefore don't pretend to present them as a sole or exclusive model but only as ideas which may be useful in the debate over the use of film in non-liberated countries."

## A blackboard

In October 1969 Jean-Luc Godard interviewed Solanas and Getino in Paris, and then published the following pronouncement in the Maoist magazine *Cinétique*: "During the screening of an imperialist film, the screen sells the voice of the boss to the viewer; the voice flatters, represses or bludgeons. During the screening of a revisionist film, the screen is only the loudspeaker of a voice dele-

gated by the people but which is no longer the voice of the people, for the people watch their own disfigured face in silence. During the screening of an activist film, the screen is just a blackboard or the wall of a school providing a concrete analysis of a concrete situation."

In 1984 Octavio Getino published *Some Notes on the Concept of a 'Third Cinema'*, offering a precise depiction of the Latin American economic, political, military context and the relationships between the visual essay and the written one. Getino explains: "Cine Liberación was, before anything else, our fusion as intellectuals with the reality of the working class. This determined the tentative and inconclusive nature of our proposals... Both Solanas and myself, while making this film, amassed a considerable amount of theoretical material. It was for our own use, as reflections on our ongoing practical work. It was this material that we drew upon when we developed the theories which were published between 1969 and 1971."

Taking the Marxist concept of praxis seriously, *The Hours of the Furnaces* wages its battle not only on the Argentinian political front but also on the aesthetic and theoretical fronts. Considering its modest underground provenance and its growing historical influence, the film seems to have fought victoriously because it attacked all three areas with equal energy and ingenuity. As Jean-Luc Godard once said about Solzhenitsyn: "We already knew all about what he wrote, but he was listened to because he had style." The film's renewal of the economic-political treatise as cinematic form can be traced in many subsequent films whose activism operates through similarly diverse experimental energies: Godard's *Le Rapport Darty* (1989), Raoul Peck's *Profit & Nothing But! Or Impolite Thoughts on the Class Struggle* (2001), Erik Gandini's *Surplus: Terrorized Into Being Consumers* (2003), Alexander Kluge's *Notes from Ideological Antiquity: Marx-Eisenstein-Capital* (2008), Lech Kowalski's *The End of the World Begins With One Lie* (2010) or John Gianvito's *Vapor Trail (Clark)* (2010).

Having proved its power to inspire, *The Hour of the Furnaces* remains incendiary because it affirms its thesis as if it were throwing grenades, accepting that the wind of history drives some of the flames back towards the thrower. Among its arguments urging armed struggle there is one slogan, however, that's proving false in these times of lethal neoliberalism: "No social order commits suicide." Let's hope that some collective, somewhere in the world, is preparing the tinder.

■ Many thanks to Howard Rodman, Louis-George Schwartz and Brad Stevens. *'The Hour of the Furnaces'* can be viewed on YouTube



Born 100 years ago, the Czech artist Jirí Trnka spent his career bringing fairytales magically to life, in book illustrations and puppet animation – until his last film turned his talents to a devastating allegory of Stalinism. **Peter Hames** surveys his career

# THE HAND THAT ROCKED THE KREMLIN

**T**he West Bohemian capital of Plzeň (Pilsen) has a statue commemorating two puppet figures – Spejbl and his son Hurvínek. Created by Czech puppeteer Josef Skupa in the mid-1920s, they achieved a legendary status, and repertory performances continue to this day. In 1930 one of Skupa's most gifted students, the 18-year-old Jirí Trnka helped create two additions – Mánicka, the girl next door, and the pet dog Zeryk.

In the 1950s, Trnka was to become the dominant influence in Czech film animation. In fact he's been as described in a recent study as one of the foremost Czech artists of the 20th century, in any medium. Like a rather different Czech animator, Jan Svankmajer, Trnka's work transcends any one medium – he was puppet-maker and puppet-master, painter, graphic artist, sculptor, stage and costume designer. It's perhaps this 'total vision' that gives his work its own unique flavour and sensibility – a sense that his illustrations, with their lyrical use of landscape, have been given life.

Born 100 years ago this February into a lower-middle-class family still aware of their rural background, Trnka showed an early facility in drawing and wood carving. As a child, he created his own marionettes and staged performances for his friends. After studying under Skupa, he was trained at Prague's Academy of Art and International Design, graduating in 1935. He began his career with newspaper cartoons and illustrations, but was soon renowned for his book illustrations (principally fairytales), illustrating 130 books during his lifetime. In 1936 he founded his own

puppet theatre, moving on to work as a stage and costume designer in the 1940s. Here he developed his skill as a painter before moving to film animation when he was invited to join the Trick Brothers (Bratři v triku) studio in 1945.

During the 1950s, at the height of the Stalinist repression in Czechoslovakia, it was animated cinema that attracted world attention. In a career stretching 20 years, from the mid-1940s to the mid-1960s, Trnka made as many films, including six features. At the same time, the other great Czech animation director of the era, Karel Zeman was also attracting attention with his Méliès-influenced mixture of live action and animation (he had earlier studied in Paris as an advertising artist). It's easy to see why the Czech approach to animation came to be seen as a refreshing alternative to Disney, their films shown internationally both in cinemas and on television.

Trnka's early work is in what some might see as the more conventional area of two-dimensional animation, but his film *The Gift* (*Dárek*, 1946) was hailed by John Halas and Joy Batchelor in the *Penguin Film Review* for its "pure sense of graphic design". One French critic even described it as the *Citizen Kane* of animation. Stephen Bosustow of UPA – makers of *Mister Magoo* and the award-winning *Rooty Toot Toot* (1951) – admitted its effect on their new styles of animation, and there was also an obvious influence on the conventions of the Zagreb school of animated films.

## THE CLASSICS IN STOP-MOTION

Left to right: Trnka animated works as diverse as 'The Emperor's Nightingale', 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' and 'The Good Soldier Svejk'

Of course, modernist inclinations were not encouraged in Czechoslovakia after the imposition of Socialist Realist ideas following the Communist takeover of 1948. Nonetheless Trnka is often credited with having kept the more experimental traditions of Czech art alive under conditions that were at best unpromising. His film *The Merry Circus* (*Veselý cirkus*, 1951), for instance, animated the images of the painter Frantisek Tichý, whose work was branded 'formalist' in the same year. While Trnka's films frequently displeased the authorities, animated film was difficult for them to supervise, and he was working predominantly in the officially approved areas of folktale and fairytale.

His first puppet feature *The Czech Year* (*Spalíček*, 1947) was firmly embedded in the folk tradition, as was the later *Old Czech Legends* (*Staré pověsti české*, 1953). In the first film, which consists of six episodes illustrating the customs and rituals of country life, Trnka's puppets resemble products of a child's imagination, with simple doll-like faces and short, fat bodies. The second film (adapted from Alois Jirásek's collection of Czech chronicles and legends) moved towards greater individual characterisation – and was also the first in which Trnka's puppets speak. Trnka began to be talked about as a 'peasant poet', with French critics comparing his work to the paintings of Henri 'le Douanier' Rousseau.

Most accounts of Trnka's work tend to focus on the development and design of his puppets, and the technical complexities of his work. Trnka found conventional cartoons limiting, arguing that the very nature of cartoon figures lies in







**‘The Hand’ remains one of the most overt attacks on Stalinism to have been made in the 1960s**



continual motion – it’s not possible to stop them “or bring them into a state of contemplation”. In the design of his puppets, by contrast, Trnka avoided the changing mouths and eyes of existing film tradition in favour of carefully painted fixed expressions. One of Trnka’s most important animators, Bretislav Pojar, noted that when Trnka painted his puppets, he gave them a deliberately undefined look – it was through movement and lighting that their characters and emotions would be revealed: “By merely turning their heads, or by a change in lighting, they gained smiling or unhappy or dreamy expressions.” In the grace and precision of movement, Trnka’s work often approaches an almost ballet-like aesthetic. The essence of his work can perhaps be said to rest in the ‘less is more’ approach advocated by his mentor, Josef Skupa.

Via his many book illustrations, Trnka made a significant contribution to the art of the fairytale, and he brought the same flowing lyricism to films such as his Hans Christian Andersen adaptation *The Emperor’s Nightingale* (*Císařuv slavík*, 1948), which won him international acclaim. Here he juxtaposes the live-action story of a sick boy with that of the Chinese emperor imprisoned in his palace. Reality interacts with fantasy as the various objects in the boy’s room are transferred to the world of puppets. Originally filmed without commentary, it was supplied with one for its French release by no less a figure than Jean

Cocteau (and by Boris Karloff in the US).

In 1950’s *Prince Bayaya* (*Bajaja*), Trnka’s magical telling of a story of knights, princesses and three-headed dragons recalls the delicacy of Lotte Reiniger’s 1926 film *The Adventures of Prince Achmed*. His puppets are still like children’s toys, but they’re filmed with a delicate lyricism, all set to a stunning music score by Václav Trojan, including songs to verses by the one-time surrealist poet Vítězslav Nezval, author of *Valerie and Her Week of Wonders* (itself memorably filmed in 1970 by Jaromil Jires). The fluttering of Bayaya’s cloak and the delicate mane of his snow-white horse are important elements in the overall conception. In fact, Trnka always admitted that he strove for “lyrical expression”.

His crowning achievement in the fairytale genre, however, was his 1959 ‘Scope feature version of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (*Sen noci svatojánské*), the narration of which was provided in English by Richard Burton. Here the three worlds of the Athenian court, the mechanicals and Oberon’s forest are presented in differing styles. Puck is magically transformed into bird or animal, and Titania’s train is a wonderful mass of flowers and insect-like fairies and elves. Drawing on both dance and pantomime, Trnka also uses a full range of ‘normal’ film techniques – long shots, close shots, a variety of angles and a moving camera. He further develops complex group scenes where the puppets ‘react’ as if on stage. Trnka had illustrated ➤





ARCHIVES / JERET LUSING (C)

the play in the early 1930s and is unsurprisingly at his best in evoking the magic world of the fairies.

But if Trnka is best recognised for his folk- and fairytale-inspired work, his films embraced many other areas. His parody western *Song of the Prairie* (*Arie prerie*, 1949), based on Jirí Brdecka's 'Lemonade Joe' western stories of the 1940s, was an international success, with its theme tune (later immortalised in the 1964 feature spoof *Lemonade Joe/Limonádový Joe*) a parody of that for John Ford's *Stagecoach*. Trnka's adaptation of Jaroslav Hasek's *The Good Soldier Svejk* (*Osudy dobrého vojáka Svejka*, 1954-55), meanwhile, provided a superb opportunity to satirise authority. *Novel with a Double Bass* (*Román s basou*, 1949) was adapted from Chekhov, while *Cybernetic Grandmother* (*Kybernetická babicka*, 1962) gave him a chance to develop in more formally radical directions.

Not by any means a political filmmaker, Trnka was immersed in a Czech tradition that tapped deeper roots than those of post-war radicalism. But his last film, the short *The Hand* (*Ruka*, 1965), was something new. It tells the story of a happy potter whose simple creative life is ruined by the demands of the state. An enormous hand commissions him to make official works, but he refuses. Initially the hand tries to persuade him, offering him money and women; ultimately it resorts to force. After being locked in a golden cage, the potter manages to escape and return to his humble craft. But his attempts to resist sculpting images of

**BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD**  
Renowned for his illustrations of fairytales, Czech artist Jirí Trnka went on to become a key figure in the development of puppet animation

the monumental hand lead to terrifying hammerings at the door – and his eventual death from a heart attack. The state nonetheless places a medal on his coffin before ending with a fascist salute.

Appearing just after the first films of the Czech New Wave, but well before any of their explicitly political works, *The Hand* remains one of the most overt attacks on Stalinism to have been made in the 1960s. When Trnka died in 1969, the year after the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia, he was awarded a state funeral. But when a retrospective of his work was held a year later at the Karlovy Vary Film Festival, *The Hand* was omitted. As late as the 1980s, an exhibit featuring *The Hand* even mysteriously disappeared from a 1980s Prague exhibition on the history of cinema.

Trnka was undoubtedly the true founder of Czech puppet film – although his reputation as 'the Czech Disney' presents a false parallel. Given the extraordinary history of Czech and Slovak animated film since Trnka's debut in 1945, it's fair to say that he established a school – though it would be unfair to deny the individuality of his former assistants such as Bretislav Pojar, Stanislav Latal and Vlasta Pospíšilová.

Pojar, who has also made major films in Canada, continues to teach at the Prague film School,

where his students have included Tomáš Lunák, whose noir-ish *Alois Nebel* is the Czech nomination for this year's Oscars. Pospíšilová, meanwhile, has contributed to all three of the successful feature-length adaptations from Jan Werich's *Fimfárum* stories (originally illustrated by Trnka), and also worked with Svankmajer on films such as *Jabberwocky* (1971) and *Dimensions of Dialogue* (1982).

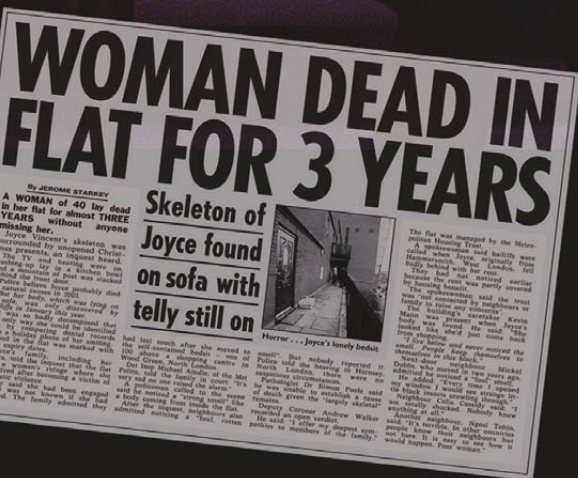
Svankmajer's influences, of course, come from elsewhere – from masked theatre, Meyerhold, Oskar Schlemmer, and more directly from his active surrealism. But a visit to the puppet museum in Trnka's home town of Plzeň demonstrates the wealth and range of Czech traditions. Jirí Barta (*The Pied Piper/Krysar*, 1986) is another major figure, while talented younger filmmakers include Aurel Klimt and Jan Balej.

Klimt, another contributor to the *Fimfárum* series, is perhaps best known for his adaptation of Daniil Kharm's absurdist fable *The Fall* (*Pád*, 1999), while Balej, who contributed to *Fimfárum 2*, directed *One Night in the City* (*Jedné noci v jednom meste*, 2007) – a wittily Kafkaesque feature inspired by 'real' life in the Prague district of Žižkov. While many thought that the Czech puppet film would die without state support, it seems almost to have survived through sheer imaginative will.

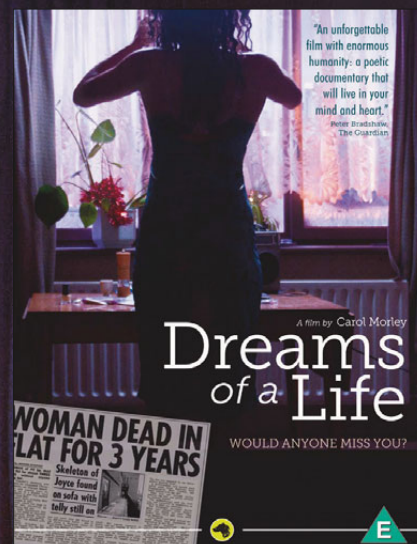
■ A Jirí Trnka season plays at BFI Southbank, London from 2-27 April, before continuing to Edinburgh, Glasgow and Bristol in April and May



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MASTERPIECES OF THIS CENTURY"

Tony Pipolo, FILM COMMENT

★★★★★  
"A GORGEOUS, MESMERIC SPECTACLE...  
RUIZ OFFERS ENORMOUS AND  
UNIQUE PLEASURE"

Peter Bradshaw, THE GUARDIAN



## Mysteries of Lisbon

Raúl Ruiz

This epic retelling of the novel by Camilo Castelo Branco has been widely hailed as the climax of Ruiz' career, and was to prove to be his last completed film. *Mysteries of Lisbon* plunges us into a whirlwind of adventures, coincidences and revelations, violent passions, vengeance, and love affairs, in a story that moves from 19th century Portugal to France. The characters are all linked to the destiny of Pedro da Silva, orphan in a boarding school: Father Dinis, a descendant of libertines; a countess maddened by her jealousy; a businessman who mysteriously made his fortune as a pirate, all searching for the true identity of Pedro da Silva.

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Jafar Panahi's **This Is Not a Film** was put on a USB stick and smuggled out of Iran in a cake. It's a bold and moving – and against the odds, highly entertaining – act of artistic and political defiance **p76**  
.....



# Crime and punishment

*'Into the Abyss' is not just a compelling documentary about a convicted murderer on Death Row, but a further chapter in Werner Herzog's obsessive exploration of the American way of life – and death. By Tony Rayns*

## Into the Abyss A Tale of Death, a Tale of Life

Werner Herzog, 2011

Werner Herzog makes an unlikely American. Of all the 'New German Cinema' directors who surged in European film culture in the 1970s, Wim Wenders seemed the one most likely to cross the pond. Wenders droned on about "the Americans colonising our subconscious", but you could tell from his infatuation with Edward Hopper-style Americana, his yearning for Hawksian camaraderie and his vaguely misogynistic Puritanism that he was well cut out for Hollywood. So it was no surprise that it was Wenders who signed with American Zoetrope to make *Hammett* (1982) while Herzog went looking for close encounters with erupting volcanoes and shot films in the Sahara and up the Amazon.

Of course, *Hammett* turned out to be a cautionary experience for Wenders (see *The State of Things* for details) and he has ended up as much a Euro-film bureaucrat as a director, with *Pina* consolidating a late penchant for making performance documents. Herzog has meanwhile become one of the most prolific filmmakers of his generation, using a base in Los Angeles to produce a steady stream of oddball features (*The Bad Lieutenant: Port of Call New Orleans*, *Rescue Dawn*) and idiosyncratic documentaries, the latter generally financed by US cable channels. The new documentary *Into the Abyss* has the same place in his filmography that *Paris, Texas* has in Wenders's.

*Paris, Texas*, dominated by Ry Cooder's dolorous slide-guitar solos, was all about reuniting the emotionally damaged members of a broken family. *Into the Abyss*, strongly coloured by Mark Degli Antoni's score featuring plangent guitar picking from David Byrne and Sebastian Steinberg, is formally dedicated to the families of victims of violent crime; it deals with the



**A week before his execution, the boyish Michael Perry faces his fate with a brash equanimity, looking forward to an afterlife reunion with his late mother**

decade-long fallout from three killings in 2001. Both films see small-town Texas as a nexus of white-trash social problems: alcoholism, drug addiction, tawdry bars, illiteracy and inarticulacy, mental and physical prisons. In short, trailer-park lives. Less inclined than Herzog to Germanic romanticism, Wenders (and his scriptwriter Sam Shepard) never get into metaphors of "the abyss" – but they are no less fixated than Herzog on the nihilism and incipient madness bred by empty lives, not to mention the DNA spirals of despair and hope in dead-end towns. In the face-off between fiction and documentary, though, Herzog wins. His real-life interviewees ultimately say more than the characters created by Shepard and Wenders, and the glimpses we're given of their lives are a whole lot more poignant.

*Into the Abyss* is not an investigative documentary in the usual sense. Structured in a prologue and six chapters (each section features two or more interviewees), it uses a police account to set out the facts of the case. In Conroe, Texas, in 2001, two dooper teenagers, Michael Perry and Jason Burkett, shot dead

middle-class housewife Sandra Stotler while she was baking cookies at home. Their motive was to steal her car, but they found themselves unable to drive out of the gated community where she lived. So they called up Stotler's adopted son, their acquaintance Adam Stotler, who arrived with his friend Jeremy Richardson. These two boys were subsequently murdered for the electronic device which opened the community's gates, enabling Perry and Burkett to complete their theft of the car; Perry also stole Adam Stotler's driving licence and pretended to be him when first challenged by the police for show-off driving in the car, which he claimed to have bought with a lottery win.

Perry and Burkett were arrested in a shootout less than three days after the murders. Perry confessed on the spot and gave evidence which led police to the corpses of the two boys; he was sentenced to death. Burkett was also convicted, but given a life sentence after the jury heard testimony from his father, also a long-term jailbird, about the boy's sickly and deprived childhood. Facing execution eight days after speaking with Herzog, Perry (who calls himself "a

Christian") now denies having murdered anyone. Burkett also denies murder; since being jailed he has married a woman who helped with his appeal, and she is now expecting his child by artificial insemination.

This account leaves dozens of questions about the case unanswered, but there's no dispute about the outcome of the trial – and Herzog anyway isn't conducting an Errol Morris-style inquiry. What interests him, as his title suggests, is defining "the abyss". He has two things on his mind. One is the death penalty itself: he's against it, and he finds an eloquent ally in the person of Fred Allen, former chief of the Death House at Huntsville Prison, who quit his job suffering something like post-traumatic stress after supervising 125 executions. (All those statistics about Texas executing more prisoners than any other state and George W. Bush never commuting a death sentence during his years as governor go unmentioned in the film, but Herzog didn't pick murders in Texas by accident.) Peter Zeitlinger's camera prowls through the execution chamber, examining with appalled fascination the straps used to bind the prisoner to the gurney, but Herzog wisely omits any anti-capital-punishment tub-thumping: a *Shoah*-like documentation of the bureaucracy of executions is enough.

The other "abyss" Herzog is venturing into is the raging emptiness that leads screwed-up teenagers from broken homes to commit senseless crimes, and that equally leaves bereaved relatives contemplating suicide. He interviews two of those left behind, Sandra Stotler's daughter and Jeremy Richardson's brother, and asks both of them to hold up portraits of the deceased as their memories choke them up. He also interviews two innocent bystanders about their encounters with the killers; one (an ultra-macho guy) was physically attacked, the other (a seen-it-all woman) was intimidated and scared. But the catalogue of pain, abuse and social squalor comes into sharpest focus in the three prison interviews Herzog





## The human monster

*Werner Herzog on the motivation behind 'Into the Abyss'*

I am not an advocate of the death penalty. I do not even have an argument, I only have a story – the history of the barbarism of Nazi Germany.

There were thousands and thousands of cases of capital punishment; there was a systematic programme of euthanasia, and on top of it the industrialised extermination of six million Jews in a genocide that has no precedence in human history. The argument that innocent men and women have been executed is, in my opinion, only a secondary one. A state should not be allowed – under any circumstance – to execute anyone for any reason. End of story.

I am not in the business of establishing guilt or innocence. For this, there are courts of law. The films are not an apology for the committed crimes, either. It is absolutely clear that the crimes of the persons in my film are monstrous, but the perpetrators are not monsters. They are human. For this reason, I treat them with respect, addressing them with Mr and their full name. Although I am not visible, I wear a formal suit.

The balance – the right tone – in



WERNER HERZOG

the dialogues is essential: there is no activist's anger from my side, although my position is clear; there is no false sentimentality; there is no commiseration; there is no chumminess. But there is a sense of solidarity with the inmates concerning their appeals and legal battles to have their execution delayed or transformed into a life sentence. And, above all, there is a strong sense that these individuals are human beings.

conducts through bullet-proof glass, two with the killers themselves (one shortly before his death) and the third with Jason Burkett's father Delbert, a former junkie/alcoholic who will spend the rest of his life in jail, and who is now piously remorseful about his failure as a parent.

A week before his execution by lethal injection, the toothy, boyish Michael Perry faces his fate with a brash equanimity, looking forward to an afterlife reunion with his late mother. He's in full denial of his crimes and speaks more about his memories of a boyhood trip to the Everglades (gators, monkeys) than about the murders. His big mistake, he says, was in ever trusting the slightly older Jason Burkett to take care of him. The markedly less excitable Burkett himself, interviewed separately, also denies murder and indicates the five places he was shot during his arrest; he speaks warmly – and surprisingly articulately – about his father, and about the 'Death Row groupie' who has married him in jail. Herzog notes in the presskit that Burkett is apparently an Aryan Supremacist ("though he denies it") and he certainly looks the part, but the most effective challenge to his

### PARTNERS IN CRIME

**Convicted of a triple murder in Texas in 2001, Jason Burkett, above, received a life sentence, while the slightly younger Michael Perry, facing page, was sentenced to death**

wounded-innocent front is the testimony from one Jared Talbert that Burkett once held a loaded gun to his head for 45 minutes in a dispute over a girl.

Some of the film's virtues are negative ones. Herzog doesn't appear on screen and spares us his usual voiceover speculations about the protagonists' dreams. (His notes assure us that he wore a formal suit throughout, complementing the politesse of his questions.) The refusal to engage in arguments and recriminations is also admirable, as is the understatement of the film's polemic thrust. The nearest it comes to rhetorical excess is the rather florid chapter titles. For once, Herzog the batty ethnographer is nowhere in evidence; this film is wholly the product of Herzog the romantic pessimist. He stares into the "abyss" and it stares back with tears and remarkable tenderness: the film ends with extraneous but oddly touching talk of hummingbirds. *For credits and synopsis, see page 67*



# Act of Valour

USA 2012

Directors: Scott Waugh, Mouse McCoy

In his book *The Language of Cinema*, the author and critic Kevin Jackson notes that propaganda films, which he defines as “calculated primarily to advance a particular national or political ideology or cause (especially in time of war)”, date back to the earliest years of film-making in the shape of Georges Méliès’s *L’Affaire Dreyfus* (1899). Originating as a short recruiting film for the US Navy, *Act of Valour* is without question a work of contemporary propaganda, brazenly presenting the War on Terror in terms that will gladden the hearts of fervent neocons: no Abu Ghraib-style torture of prisoners, no slaying of innocent civilians by rage-fuelled American soldiers, and no drone attacks on non-combatants. Instead we watch a unit of ultra-professional SEALs (specialist sea-air-land forces) who are dedicated to the ideals of “honour, freedom, justice and family”, and who are calmly prepared to sacrifice their own lives in the struggle against tyranny.

A prologue sees stuntmen-turned-directors Mike ‘Mouse’ McCoy and Scott Waugh facing the camera and stressing the ‘authenticity’ of their project: apparently active-duty SEALs played versions of themselves and remain unnamed for security reasons in the credits; live bullets were used during filming; and the script assembled by 300 writer Kurt Johnstad was based on real-life incidents. However, despite the plethora of action sequences and point-of-view shots from combatants, in which the granite-hewn Americans parachute into the jungle, storm rebel bases and don frogman gear for sorties from mini-sub, the film is weirdly devoid of the experiential quality that marked out Kathryn Bigelow’s *The Hurt Locker* (2008). Accompanied by a bombastic classical score, war here is reconfigured as a slick videogame, a procession of instant, clean ‘kills’ of adversaries. (One American officer reassures a Mexican colleague that the climactic mission won’t be a repeat of *Black Hawk Down*.) And anyway what chance do the film’s

physically unprepossessing ‘fanatics’ – Russian drug smuggler Christo and scarred Chechen jihadist Shabal – have against the strapping, square-jawed American heroes?

The final indignity is hearing the shameless appropriation of the words of 19th-century Shawnee chief Tecumseh, an implacable opponent of the American government. “Live your life that the fear of death can never enter your heart. Trouble no one about his religion,” quotes a soldier in a letter written to a fallen colleague’s unborn baby, whose father and grandfather have given up their lives for ‘our’ freedom.

◆ Thomas Dawson

## CREDITS

**Produced by**  
Mouse McCoy  
Scott Waugh  
**Written by**  
Kurt Johnstad  
**Director of Photography**  
Shane Hurlbut  
**Editors**  
Scott Waugh  
Michael Tronick  
**Production Designer**  
John Zachary  
**Music**  
Nathan Furst  
**Production Sound Mixer**  
Gene F. Martin  
**Costume Designer**  
Erica Clum  
**Stunt Co-ordinator**  
Chad Randall

©IATM, LLC  
**Production Companies**  
A Bandito Brothers production in association with Tom Clancy  
A Relativity Media presentation  
**Executive Producers**  
Max Leitman  
Jay Pollak  
Jason Clark  
Ryan Kavanaugh  
Tucker Tooley  
Jason Colbeck  
Michael Mailis  
Benjamin Statler  
Lance Sloane  
Bert Ellis  
Bob Kaminski  
Chris George

## CAST

**Roselyn Sanchez**  
Lisa Morales  
**Jason Cottle**  
Abu Shabal

**Alex Veadov**  
Christo  
**Nestor Serrano**  
Walter Ross  
**Ailsa Marshall**  
Lt Rorke’s wife, Jackie  
**Gonzalo Menendez**  
Commander Pedro  
**Emilio Rivera**  
Sanchez  
**Dimitar Marinov**  
Kerimov  
**Lieutenant Commander Rorke**  
Lieutenant Rorke  
**SOC Dave**  
Chief Dave

**Dolby Digital**  
**In Colour**  
[2.35:1]

**Distributor**  
Momentum Pictures

US theatrical title/  
Onscreen title  
**Act of Valor**

# Babycall

Norway/Germany/Sweden 2011

Director: Pål Sletaune

Staticky, ear-splitting screaming erupts from a baby monitor, electrifying a mother. But the child repeatedly sobbing “No, I don’t want to” isn’t her own child in the next bedroom.

Norwegian director Pål Sletaune, who proved a dab hand at creating subjective realities in the psychosexual shocker *Next Door* (2005), opens this sensitive, understated horror drama with a dilemma. Are the bursts of childish terror transmitted from a neighbour’s baby monitor due to horrific abuse or just a temper tantrum? Rather than using the gadget stereotypically as an electronic conduit to CGI eruptions of the uncanny in the fright-fest style of *Insidious* (2010), *Babycall* is initially resolutely realist in tone. It’s more interested in the plight of Anna (Noomi Rapace), an overprotective mother rehousing with her son Anders to evade her murderous husband, than in throwing scares into her – or us.

As Anna’s mounting paranoia about her husband makes social workers threaten to remove Anders from her, the film adroitly frays her psychologically. She increasingly can’t believe her ears – or eyes – as *Babycall* revisits the skilful slippage between reality and fantasy that made *Next Door* so unsettling. These two films, each with a mentally crumbling protagonist, complement one another neatly, though *Babycall* is as low-key as its predecessor was lurid. The narrative is deliberately toned down this time around, as a sleep-deprived Anna sees neighbours

removing what could be a child’s body or just a sleeping bag, and finds that a lake where she saw a boy murdered has become a perfectly plausible car park.

Sletaune admits to an interest in early Polanski and *The Shining* (1980), influences made manifest in the film’s close and occasionally over-lengthy interest in Anna’s gradual disintegration. Yoking together a psychological study and a palely paranormal horror story, the film is so busy establishing its unreliable protagonist that it forgoes the escalating scares expected of horror dramas – a splash of blood on a child’s drawing or a whey-faced mysterious ‘friend’ for Anders is as spooky as you get before the denouement. But it feels replete with dread and mystery, whether it’s the real-or-unreal threat of Anders’s father, or the exact location of the elusive screaming child Anna struggles to find in her grim tower block.

What holds your attention rapt is Rapace’s quivering, piercingly vulnerable Anna, whose every gesture attests to her fierce need to protect Anders. Lacing her fingers through his when they sleep, haunting his school playground, she emanates a ceaseless tension that powers the film through its quieter moments. We’re never sure if she’s a ‘good’ mother, or whether Helge (a nicely subdued Kristoffer Joner), the gentle sales assistant who befriends her, is a potential saviour or stalker. Motherhood as the highest motive for paranoia is under scrutiny here (Helge is, naturally, a smothered mother’s boy) and it is seen in shades of grey, rather like the Oslo suburb Anna inhabits.

This kind of restraint is the film’s hallmark, reinforced by the minimal dialogue, the bleached and chilly Nordic palette employed by cinematographer



Wake-up call: Noomi Rapace

**SYNOPSIS** A Navy SEALs (sea-air-land) team, including father of five Chief Dave and Lieutenant Rorke, whose wife is expecting their first child, is dispatched to Costa Rica. The team’s mission is to rescue female CIA agent Morales, who has been abducted and tortured by South American gunmen loyal to Russian drug smuggler Christo. Although Morales is successfully freed in a combined air-and-sea operation, the elite American forces discover a wider plot to attack the US: Christo has teamed up with Chechen terrorist Shabal and the duo intend to smuggle jihadists across the border from Mexico into America. Equipped with suicide vests, these foreign fighters will then launch simultaneous explosions at locations across the US.

Having conducted a surveillance operation in Somalia, where they witness Shabal transferring weapons at an airfield, the SEALs track Shabal and Christo across the globe. Various SEALs storm a luxury boat in the Pacific and capture and interrogate Christo, before raiding a camp on an island off Mexico where the bombers are sheltering before they slip into the US. Shabal and some of his operatives escape to a warehouse in a border town controlled by Mexican drug cartels. In a ferocious firefight, Rorke is killed when he jumps on a grenade to protect his fellow soldiers; Chief Dave is severely wounded while pursuing and killing Shabal.

A military funeral for Rorke is attended by his widow Jackie and his SEALs colleagues. In voiceover, Chief Dave reads out a letter to Rorke’s unborn son.



John Andreas Andersen and the taut, pared-back score by Fernando Velazquez. Indeed it's *Babycall's* delicacy, its stubborn refusal to spell out details of character or narrative, that makes its late and sudden tip into violence unnerving. Clues are laid equally discreetly for the supernatural final reveal, which viewers will either find satisfyingly enigmatic in the fashion of *The Others* (2001) or faintly disconcerting after such a painstakingly muted build-up. **Kate Stables**

## CREDITS

**Producer**  
Turid Øversveen  
**Written by**  
Pål Sletaune  
**Director of Photography**  
John Andreas Andersen  
**Editor**  
Jon Endre Mørk  
**Art Director**  
Roger Rosenberg  
**Music**  
Fernando Valazquez  
**Sound Designers**  
Tormod Ringnes  
Christian Schaanning  
**Costume Designer**  
Ellen Ystehede

©4 1/2 Fiksjon AS,  
Pandora Filmproduktion  
GmbH, BOB Film  
Sweden AB  
**Production Companies**  
41/2 presents a  
Pandora Film, BOB Film  
Sweden co-production  
in co-operation with SF  
Norge, NFP, NRK, The  
Match Factory  
With the support of  
Norsk filmindustri,  
HessenInvestFilm,  
Eurimages, Nordisk Film  
og TV Fond, Svenska  
Filminstitutet, The  
MEDIA programme of  
the European Union

A film by Pål Sletaune  
**Executive Producers**  
Håkon Øverås  
Karin Julsrød  
Marius Holst  
Pål Sletaune

## CAST

**Noomi Rapace**  
Anna  
**Vette Qvenild Werring**  
Anders  
**Kristoffer Joner**  
Helge  
**Stig Amund**  
Ole  
**Maria Bock**  
Grete

**Dolby Digital**  
**In Colour**  
[2.35:1]  
**Subtitles**

**Distributor**  
Soda Pictures

# Bill Cunningham New York

**Director: Richard Press**  
**Certificate 12A 84m 20s**

Photographer Bill Cunningham can legitimately be described as a New York legend. Not just because he's hugely respected for his observant eye and Olympian diligence, and not just because he has been a fixture of Manhattan's pavements and nightlife for so many decades; these are all questions of renown, of being known and recognised. He's legendary too because of the many unknowns. So intensely private is Cunningham that the director of this study, Richard Press, has spoken of it having had a ten-year gestation: two years of production made possible by eight years spent convincing its subject to cooperate.

Cunningham's life in one sense is lived in public: photographing whatever styles catch his eye on the Manhattan streets by day for one *New York Times* column, then making the rounds of the city's society events in the evenings for another. But as Press shows through a gentle teasing out of Cunningham's friends and colleagues, his life beyond work is a mystery. The monastic devotion and discipline Press's film reveals is both daunting and inspiring. Press visits Cunningham's ascetic apartment, a tiny shoebox perched high over Carnegie Hall in a complex of studios that historically accommodated numerous artists and actors (Marlon Brando among them). Its tiny space seems to be rammed with nothing but filing cabinets and shelving, every inch filled with negatives, slides and books. In contrast to his subjects, Cunningham dresses anonymously and functionally in a kind of personal uniform: a blue cotton jacket of the kind worn by Parisian street-sweepers, with a poncho (patched together with sticky tape) in case of rain.

Cunningham could be said to have invented what is now known as 'street-style' photography. But even setting his career aside, he makes a fascinating psychological study. He has, for instance, a singular aversion to being paid for his work (beyond, presumably, subsistence level, as he remains in good health). One friend speculates that this, and his ease around figures from Manhattan's aristocracy, suggests a moneyed background. In fact, Press discovers, his family was only modestly wealthy – Cunningham rejects payment because of the obligation it imposes on him and the power it gives his employer. He almost screeches with triumphant delight as he explains the sense of artistic independence this has given him in his work with editors and publishers over the years.

Visually, Press's style is unobtrusively observant, which is almost a given for this kind of fly-on-the-wall study. But here it's particularly marked, with the camera almost creeping up on



**Snaps decision: Bill Cunningham**

Cunningham, often catching him at work on the streets from a distance, like a bird in its natural habitat. Press's film conveys a sense of Cunningham's aesthetic, not just through a liberal use of his photography but also in the fascinating scenes in which he is composing the page for his street-style column with *New York Times* designer John Kurdewan. Their bickering and badgering as each image is shunted and resized on screen tells the viewer as much about Cunningham as any of the talking heads.

However, the most revealing moment comes when Press sets aside his scrupulously non-invasive style to ask Cunningham directly about his romantic history and his religious faith. Cunningham's answers on paper would provide little detail – but his face reveals a pain of terrible depth and age. It's an unexpectedly moving moment in a film otherwise best summarised by Cunningham's own injunction to himself: "He who seeks for beauty shall find it." **Sam Davies**

## CREDITS

**Produced by**  
Philip Gaffer  
**Cinematography**  
Tony Cenicola  
Richard Press  
**Edited by**  
Ryan Denmark  
**Photographic Animation**  
Keira Alexandra

©[TBC]  
**Production Companies**  
The New York Times  
and First Thought Films  
present a film by  
Richard Press

**Dolby Digital**  
**In Colour**  
[1.85:1]

**Distributor**  
Dogwoof

7,590 ft +0 frames

**SYNOPSIS** A documentary looking at the daily life and work of Bill Cunningham, who for decades has been photographing fashion trends on the streets of Manhattan by day and documenting the city's society events at night for the *New York Times*. Friends, colleagues and subjects such as Annette de la Renta, Anna Wintour and Tom Wolfe are interviewed, and we also see Cunningham (now in his eighties) at work, in his Carnegie Hall studio apartment, and in Paris for Fashion Week.

# Black Gold

**France/Italy/Qatar 2011**  
**Director: Jean-Jacques Annaud**  
**Certificate 12A 130m 6s**

The first international co-production to be financed by Qatar and its nascent Doha Film Institute, *Black Gold* is the long-gestating brainchild of veteran producer Tarak Ben Ammar, who initially purchased the rights to the source novel (*The Great Thirst*) by Swiss author Hans Ruesch in the late 1970s. Envisioning Ruesch's tale of ruthless progress clashing with stubborn traditionalism over an oil-rich no-man's-land on the Arabian Peninsula as a lavish blockbuster starring Omar Sharif, Richard Harris and Anthony Quinn, Ben Ammar's pet project ultimately ran aground because of funding snags. The marquee names may have changed, but the finally emergent film plays like a shelved product of a bygone era – a sumptuous but flatulent epic, laced with lumpen exoticism and unearned bombast.

Though shot amid the dunes of Tunisia and Qatar, the stage is an unspecified Arabian country at the turn of the 20th century, when two rival kingdoms end a bloody feud by declaring the 'Yellow Belt' of land between them out of bounds for both sides. As per tradition, the defeated Sultan Amar (Mark Strong) must give up his sons to the victorious Emir Nesib (Antonio Banderas) as an insurance policy. When, years later, Texan oilmen inform Nesib that the Yellow Belt is a potential goldmine, the truce begins to fray. Meanwhile Amar's sons have grown – brawny Saleeh yearns for escape, while sensitive, bookish Auda (Tahar Rahim) makes eyes at Nesib's daughter (Freida Pinto) and oversees the kingdom's new library.

By this point, any faint hopes for a searing portrait of unchecked greed in the vein of *There Will Be Blood* (2007) are thoroughly dashed. Instead, *Black Gold* opts for a laboured, often corny focus on Auda's struggle to choose between two symbolic fathers: one progressive but unscrupulous, the other traditional and devout but mired in the past. Through a series of plot machinations, Auda – like Michael Corleone – is thrust into the spotlight when his hot-headed brother gets himself killed. Rahim is thus called on to navigate a similar character arc to his star-making turn in *A Prophet* (2009) – the petrified greenhorn steadily morphing into a watchful, cunning general. It's more a fault of the misfiring script than this transformation never really convinces. Handed generally hackneyed dialogue, most of the cast – including Rahim – look rather adrift, with only Mark Strong's grave sultan standing out.

Director Jean-Jacques Annaud specialises in period spectacle (*The Name of the Rose*, *Seven Years in Tibet*, *Enemy at the Gates*) and *Black Gold* certainly looks the part, with vast desert vistas, painterly wide shots of the warring kingdoms and fitfully arresting set pieces. But his film rankles by brashly insisting on epic



← qualities that its story doesn't quite warrant, James Horner's score blaring vaingloriously at the merest hint of incident. There's surely a compelling story to be told about the Arabian oil boom, but *Black Gold* feels like a missed opportunity. **♥♥ Matthew Taylor**

## CREDITS

**Producer**  
Tarak Ben Ammar  
**Screenplay**  
Menno Meyjes  
**Adaptation**  
Jean-Jacques Annaud  
Alain Godard  
Based on the novel *The Great Thirst* by Hans Ruesch  
**Director of Photography**  
Jean-Marie Dreujou  
**Edited by**  
Herve Schneid  
**Production Designer**  
Pierre Queffélec  
**Music Composed by**  
James Horner  
**Supervising Sound Editor**  
Selim Azzazi  
**Costume Designer**  
Fabio Perrone

©Quinta Communications, Prima TV, France 2  
Cinéma, Carthago Films  
**Production Companies**  
Tarak Ben Ammar presents a Quinta Communications, Prima TV, Carthago Films and France 2 Cinéma co-production  
In association with Doha Film Institute  
**Executive Producer**  
Xavier Costanzo

## CAST

**Tahar Rahim**  
Auda  
**Antonio Banderas**  
Nesib  
**Mark Strong**  
Amar  
**Freida Pinto**  
Leyla  
**Riz Ahmed**  
Ali  
**Liya Kebede**  
Aicha  
**Corey Johnson**  
Thurkettle  
**Akin Gazi**  
Saleeh  
**Eriq La Salle**  
Hassan Dakhlil  
**Lotfi Dzir**  
Sheikh Beni Sirri  
**Jan Uddin**  
Ibn Idriss  
**Hichem Rostom**  
Nesibi Colonel

**Dolby Digital**  
**In Colour**  
[2.35:1]

**Distributor**  
Warner Bros  
Distributors (UK)

**11,709 ft +0 frames**

French theatrical title  
**Or noir**

**SYNOPSIS** The Arabian Peninsula, early 20th century. Amar, sultan of Salmaah, is defeated in battle by his rival Nesib, emir of Hobeika. Nesib proposes a truce, on condition that neither man will lay claim to the area of land between them known as the Yellow Belt. As insurance, Nesib adopts Amar's sons, Saleeh and Auda.

Years later, Texan oilmen visit Hobeika and inform Nesib that the oil-rich Yellow Belt can make him wealthy. Nesib installs wells in the Yellow Belt, and Hobeika prospers. Saleeh is killed when he attempts to escape and return to Salmaah. Nesib arranges for Auda – now in charge of Hobeika's library – to marry his daughter Leyla. Sent to Salmaah as a peace envoy, Auda tries in vain to convince Amar of Hobeika's progressive nature. Learning of Nesib's betrayal, Amar plots to conquer Hobeika. He persuades Auda and his half-brother Ali to act as decoys by leading a makeshift army of prisoners into the desert beyond Hobeika while Amar's real army attacks from another side. While enlisting the support of regional tribesmen, Auda is charmed by slave girl Aicha, whom he frees. Ali is killed when Hobeika's planes attack. Auda miraculously survives a bullet to the head in battle. Surrounded by Auda and Amar's armies, Nesib surrenders. Amar is assassinated by Nesib's colonel. Auda parts from Aicha, and reunites with the pregnant Leyla. He becomes emir and exiles Nesib to Texas to represent Hobeika's oil empire.



**Manhattan über alles: Scott B., Beth B., Diego Cortez, Lydia Lunch, Johnny O'Kane, Bill Rice, Adele Bertel**

## Blank City

**USA 2010**

**Director: Celine Danhier**

The digi-DIY boom in American documentary, in which it seems every failed rocker and Cold War spook and 'outsider' artist will eventually get their full-scale biopic, continues happily with this roiling evocation of a fairly specific cinematic time and place: indie-film downtown Manhattan, circa 1975-86, after Jack Smith and Andy Warhol but before Spike Lee. Alternately labelled 'no wave' or 'the cinema of transgression', the ersatz explosion crossed vectors with the rise of punk but absolutely occupied its own site-specific vibe. But calling it a 'movement' suggests a sophisticated aesthetic that just wasn't there – mostly, the randic economic depression the city enjoyed in the 1970s, with entire neighbourhoods forsaken and crumbling, precipitated a teeming class of restless, undisciplined freak artists, who would produce aggressively crude and confrontational art in any medium that crossed their path, and do it spending no money and expecting to earn even less. In many ways it was the first large-scale underground culture; suddenly, Smith, whose circle of contemporaries and cohorts was preciously small in 1963 when *Flaming Creatures* was first shown, found himself surrounded by hundreds of marginalised culture-makers, all roaming free in the cheap part of the city to which no one paid attention, and all busy making Super 8 films and sub-garage rock bands and graffiti and photography, when they weren't shooting up or sleeping off binges or trading sex partners.

Celine Danhier's portrait of the time is brisk, savvy and not overly serious – fond of this nasty, youthful craziness though we may be, there's still no consensus, beyond Jim Jarmusch's

singular achievement, about the films being terribly memorable or interesting. Certainly, the glimpses we get of films such as Vivienne Dick's *She Had Her Gun All Ready* (1978), John Lurie's *Men in Orbit* (1979), Nick Zedd's *They Eat Scum* (1979) and Richard Kern's *Manhattan Love Suicides* (1985) are more resonant for the bohemian lifestyle they suggest than for their ideas or style. That's decidedly beside the point, as interviews with Jarmusch, Kern, Zedd, Lurie, Lydia Lunch, James Nares, Amos Poe, Deborah Harry et al are cut with ample footage from the films (beginning more or less with Poe's *Night Lunch*, in 1975, and never getting quite enough of Kern's gory nose-thumbings or Dick's voguing feminist sagas), and a sense of nostalgia for the downtown's Wild West lawlessness, a product of poverty and crime, takes over. Unlike other indie-wave sagas, there are no masterpieces or lessons learned; the punk principle of the moment forbade it. (Jarmusch's *Stranger Than Paradise*,

released in 1984, is clearly the era's *Bande à part*, and it stands alone.)

The statement being made was an unvarnished Fuck You, a posture from which Kern and Zedd have never seemed to mature. Of course, transgression soon became fashion, and the commodification of the downtown scene is broadly lamented (and blamed, interestingly, on celebrated art martyr Jean-Michel Basquiat, whose sudden fame in 1981 brought on the hounds of commerce and media). The films became more outrageous, rebelling Cobain-ish against their own growing audiences. So, Danhier's film has a predictable arc – innocence to cynicism, with the middle aged mourning the glow of their reckless youth – but it's a story as lovely as it is iconic, if not for the resulting films (which are often best viewed as they are here, in bite-sized bits) than for the fire of genuine counterculture esprit. You can't help wanting to have been there.

**♥♥ Michael Atkinson**

## CREDITS

**Produced by**  
Aviva Wishnow  
Vanessa Roworth  
**Cinematography**  
Ryo Murakami  
Peter Szollosi  
**Edited by**  
Vanessa Roworth

**Original Music**  
Ecce Homo  
**Sound**  
Claire Houghtalen

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**Production Companies**

A Pure Fragment production in association with Submarine Entertainment  
**Executive Producers**  
Josh Braun  
Dan Braun  
Andrew Karsch  
Fisher Stevens  
Erik H. Gordon

**John Waters**  
Kembra Pfahler  
Lizzie Borden  
Lung Leg  
Lydia Lunch  
Manuel Delanda  
Maripol  
Michael McClard  
Michael Oblowitz  
Nick Zedd  
Pat Place  
Patti Astor  
Richard Kern  
Sara Driver  
Scott B  
Steve Buscemi  
Susan Seidelman  
Tessa Hughes Freeland  
Thurston Moore  
Tommy Turner  
Vivienne Dick

**In Colour**  
[1.85:1]

**Distributor**  
E2 Films

## WITH

Amos Poe  
Ann Magnuson  
Becky Johnston  
Beth B  
Bette Gordon  
Cassandra Stark Mele  
aka Rosanne Mello  
Charlie Ahearn  
Daze  
Deborah Harry  
Eric Mitchell  
Fab 5 Freddy  
Glenn O'Brien  
Jack Sargeant  
James Chance  
James Nares  
JG Thirlwell  
Jim Jarmusch  
John Lurie



# Bonsai: A Story of Love, Books and Plants

Chile/France/Argentina/  
Portugal 2011

Director: Cristián Jiménez

Certificate 15 95m 43s

"A tribute to the art of lying" is how Chilean filmmaker Cristián Jiménez has described his small but perfectly formed, sweet-and-sour second feature *Bonsai*. Based on the award-winning cult novella of the same title by countryman Alejandro Zambra, *Bonsai* centres on Julio, an introverted, easily distracted twentysomething wannabe writer who earns a living working in a bookstore and giving private Latin tuition. When Gazmuri, an established Chilean novelist, turns him down for the job of transcribing his new book, Julio decides to write his own – as if he were transcribing Gazmuri's – to impress his love interest, his more focused and mature next-door neighbour Blanca. But, since the past is never straightforward, Julio ends up entangled in the mesh of his memories as he obsessively rewrites the story of an adolescent affair he had eight years previously with the emotionally fragile Emilia.

Disarmingly candid and tender, *Bonsai* uses this deceptively simple activity – writing the memory of a love affair – as the trigger to reflect compellingly on the illusory nature of objective reality. In the hands of Julio, an unintentionally unreliable narrator if ever there was one, the narrative of *Bonsai* will resemble Escher's stairway painting, in which everything becomes *relative* and down to perspective. And this is precisely where most of the pleasure of the film is to be found, for Jiménez's biggest achievement is in capturing the subtle balance between mischievous playfulness and discerning existentialism that characterises Zambra's novel. As in Proust's repeatedly quoted *Remembrance of Things Past* – or probably closer in tone to the equally profound yet humorous *Don Quixote* – Julio quite literally becomes the subject of his own book. And in the process, like Cervantes's knight, his looping obsession with a fictional world will propel him to lose touch with the present and his current love interest.

Inti Briones's remarkable cinematography is key in this, as it perfectly balances a palpable sense of grounded reality with the light-hearted giddiness with which he also imbued Jiménez's first feature *Optical Illusions* (2009). His versatile compositions and striking use of light create a whole different visual realm for each woman – Emilia's nostalgic, laidback and overcast, Blanca's settled, functional and sunny – each equally authentic, thus implying Julio's own thwarted, suspended connection with both his past and present.



Things can only get meta: Gabriela Arancibia, Diego Noguera

This contrast is reiterated in the film's structure, which, though built around six chapters, is divided into two distinctive blocks linked by the narrator's voiceover – a further metatextual device. Jiménez creates a hall of mirrors through the metaphorical dialogue he establishes between the two women, so that *Bonsai* becomes open to myriad interpretations. Blanca's unawareness (she thinks the novel is Gazmuri's work, not Julio's inescapably biased memories of Emilia) enables her (and the viewer) to read his story (and ultimately the film we are watching) with a certain objective freedom to scrutinise and critically comment on the affectionately portrayed narcissistic world that Julio and Emilia have created for themselves, in which they search yearningly for individual authenticity: a ubiquitous Ramones T-shirt, headbanging at a gig, or boasting about reading Proust, the very lie upon which their relationship is constructed.

Whereas in Michel Gondry's *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004) the erasing of memories constituted the film's spine, as did the reliving of memories in its most obvious influence, Alain Resnais's masterful 1968 film *Je t'aime, je t'aime* (whose subtitle, 'Anatomy of a Suicide', incidentally seems entirely appropriate here), *Bonsai* is itself fashioned out of Julio's own recollection and interpretation of his memories. The result is most obviously a moving study of the fragility of relationships, but beyond that *Bonsai* is also a beautifully whimsical meditation on the process

of creativity, and the unavoidable subjectivity that entails. After all, and as the film's narrator puts it in the opening scene, "What matters is that Emilia dies and Julio does not die. The rest is fiction." **Mar Diestro-Dópido**

## CREDITS

### Produced by

Bruno Bettati  
Nadia Turincev  
Julie Gayet

### Written by

Cristián Jiménez  
Based on the novel  
[*Bonsai*] by Alejandro  
Zambra

### Photography Direction

Inti Briones

### Editing

Soledad Salfate

### Art Direction

Jorge Zambrano

### Original Music

Caroline Chaspoul  
Eduardo Henríquez

### Sound Design

Cristián Freund

### Costume Designer

Mary Ann Smith

### CAST

@Jirafa, Rouge  
International, Rizoma,  
Ukbar Filmes  
**Production  
Companies**  
Jirafa (Valdivia), Rouge  
International (Paris)  
present  
With the support of

Cinéfondation, La  
Résidence, Consejo  
nacional de la cultura y  
las artes - Gobierno de  
Chile, Programa  
Ibermedia, INCAA, Prix  
Cinéma en construction  
19, Toulouse  
In co-production with  
Rizoma (Buenos Aires),  
Ukbar Filmes (Lisbon)  
In association with  
Zoofilms, Kiné-  
Imágenes, L90 Cine  
Digital (Santiago), 4  
Saisons Prod (Paris)

### CAST

**Diego Noguera**  
Julio  
**Natalia Galgani**  
Emilia  
**Trinidad González**  
Blanca  
**Gabriela Arancibia**  
Bárbara

### Andrés Waas

Claudio  
**Alicia Fehrmann**  
grandmother  
**Alicia Luz Rodríguez**  
Latin student  
**Hugo Medina**  
Gazmuri

### Dolby Digital

In Colour  
[1.85:1]  
Subtitles

### Distributor

Network Releasing

8,614 ft +8 frames

Chilean theatrical title  
**Bonsái**

**SYNOPSIS** Chile, the present. Twentysomething would-be writer Julio works in a bookstore and teaches Latin to earn a living. He begins an affair with his next-door neighbour, graduate Blanca. One day Gazmuri, an established writer, proposes that Julio transcribe his forthcoming book, the story of a couple in which "she dies and he lives". But eventually Gazmuri chooses someone cheaper to do the work. Hoping to retain Blanca's interest, Julio tells her that Gazmuri has given him the job. Based on what Gazmuri has told him, he starts writing his own novel as if it were Gazmuri's, and transcribes it with Blanca.

Julio's story is about his first love affair, eight years ago, when he met Emilia at university. They use literature as foreplay, they go to gigs, and they eagerly want to believe that they are different to everyone else, but their relationship is doomed as it's built on a falsehood: both of them lied that they'd read Proust.

In the present, Julio becomes so obsessed with the novel – and his past – that eventually Blanca leaves him and moves to Spain; Julio gives her the manuscript of his novel as a parting gift. Shortly afterwards, Gazmuri publishes his own novel, which bears no relation to Julio's story. One day Julio bumps into Bárbara, Emilia's best friend, who gives him Emilia's phone number. Julio never rings her and takes up bonsai-growing instead. When the bonsai is ready, Julio learns that Emilia has committed suicide.



# Chronicle

USA 2012

Director: Josh Trank

Certificate 12A 83m 20s

Stories about teenagers with unusual or supernatural powers aren't new, generically speaking. Though the scope is vast – from superheroes (*Spider-Man*) to vampires (*Twilight*, *True Blood*), werewolves (*Teen Wolf*, *Ginger Snaps*), witches (*The Craft*), satanic possessions (*The Exorcist*, *The Omen*) and good old-fashioned mind-control (*Carrie*, *Powder*) – these stories are always, broadly speaking, a means of interrogating the problems of puberty. Josh Trank's *Chronicle* doesn't do anything particularly new with the stock fare: three high-school boys – Andrew, Matt and Steve – stumble across a luminescent rock in an underground cave, exposure to which leaves them with mind-bending powers, including telekinesis and the ability to fly.

More interesting than the story is the film's approach: it consists entirely of handheld and found footage, mostly shot by protagonist Andrew on his video camera. Unlike the much more generic *Cloverfield* (2008) – which also used found footage as a narrative device – the stylistic *vérité* here lends novelty, particularly to the early *Jackass*-style home movies which show the boys experimenting with their powers. A sequence in which the three are nearly killed by a passing

jumbo jet as they play baseball thousands of feet up is exhilarating.

Dogged determination to stick to the formula by using *only* real time or surveillance footage ultimately ends up being distracting (even *Cloverfield* knew to give it up sometimes). The final scenes, in which Andrew and Matt engage in a sprawling, hyper-violent battle taking in the whole of downtown Seattle, are overdone, undermining the much more subtle building work that's come before. But for the most part, a knowing self-reflexivity helps the film skirt cliché. Literary and filmic references are woven throughout (again, not always subtly – Schopenhauer and Jung make an appearance within the first ten minutes), and it's with a knowing nod to convention that Matt pinpoints the exact moment when hubris takes hold: "This is the beginning of your downfall," he warns an emboldened Andrew at a party in his honour.

Though weakened by a tendency to overstate, *Chronicle*'s tight focus on Andrew's psyche and his relationship with the other boys, to which the supernatural element plays second string, keeps things feeling fresh. A growing sense of unease develops naturally and believably as he loses control, his superior strength and increasing bitterness leading him to spend unhealthy amounts of time filming himself, often alone in his room, and giving the movie a darkness and complexity that is more *Benny's Video* (1992) than typical superhero-movie fare. **♥♥ Chloe Roddick**

# Contraband

USA/United Kingdom/Japan 2011

Director: Baltasar Kormákur

Certificate 15 109m 37s

Combining clichés into a smuggling/one-last-job/self-destructive-debtor film, Icelandic director Baltasar Kormákur has made a watchably unpretentious yarn as unassuming as its blue-collar hero. Trusty Mark Wahlberg plays a retired smuggler attempting one last job to bail out the idiot brother-in-law who's failed to transport his own shipment, and Kormákur, not too concerned with elegance or flash, yields an unremarkable yet acceptable afternoon at the cinema.

Somewhere in the port city of New Orleans, Chris (Wahlberg) is comfortably employed selling home-alarm systems when his brother-in-law Andy blows a drugs job and incurs the indiscriminate wrath of Briggs (Giovanni Ribisi). Settling back into the tough-guy brinksmanship of his old career, Chris organises an ambitious smuggling job involving a ship going to and from Panama, with some of the crew in cahoots. Meanwhile, back home, Chris's shifty associate Sebastian (Ben Foster) looks after his wife Kate (Kate Beckinsale) and kids, but seems to do an increasingly poor job of it.

In a giant franchise movie, the Panama/New Orleans crosscutting might be just part of a buffet of globe-trotting diversions, but it's the whole

shebang in *Contraband*. While Chris and his well-cast crew of team players winningly work around one unforeseen obstacle after another (not least his feckless brother-in-law), Kate exists to be tormented by Briggs, an albeit strong woman in peril deployed with the bluntness of an early silent short. (Kormákur reworks the 2008 Icelandic film *Reykjavík-Rotterdam*, which starred himself in the Wahlberg role.)

Bookended by customs-agent 'interdictions' (more or less special-forces teams swooping down on suspicious ships at sea), *Contraband* is probably at its best when an operation is being orchestrated on one side of the law or the other. Shooting action just the right side of hectic and slapdash, Kormákur and DP Barry Ackroyd (*The Hurt Locker*, Ken Loach films) opt for handheld coattailing. The full scope of each scene's flow of action is kept just beyond reach, notably in a bewildering armoured-car robbery (which daringly sets Chris, an unwitting participant, aside until the right moment).

The same general momentum marks most of the filmmaking, with the pleasant side-effect that jokes aren't hammered home, nor does Kormákur ever make us believe his characters are cool, underline that money can buy cool stuff, or feel obliged to explain whopping coincidences. His biggest idiosyncrasies are a devotion to thousand-twinkling-lights industrial nightscapes and a rocking-blues soundtrack. But his focus is on the job at hand, even if the movie doesn't perform its own duties superlatively.

**♥♥ Nicolas Rapold**

## CREDITS

### Produced by

John Davis

Adam Schroeder

### Screenplay

Max Landis

### Story

Max Landis

Josh Trank

### Director of

Photography

Matthew Jensen

### Editor

Elliot Greenberg

### Production Designer

Stephen Altman

### Sound Designers

Karen Triest

Tim Walston

### Costume Designer

Diana Cilliers

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Dune Entertainment III

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Entertainment III LLC (in

Brazil, Italy, Japan,

Korea and Spain)

### Production

Companies

A Twentieth Century Fox

presentation

A Davis Entertainment

Company production

Made in association

with Dune

Entertainment

Executive Producer

James Dodson

## CAST

Dane Dehaan

Andrew Detmer

Alex Russell

Matt Garetty

Michael B. Jordan

Steve Montgomery

Michael Kelly

Richard Detmer

Ashley Hinshaw

Casey Letter

Bo Peterson

Karen Detmer

Anna Wood

Monica

Rudi Malcolm

Wayne

Luke Tyler

Sean

Crystal Donna Roberts

Samantha

Adrian Collins

Costly

Grant Powell

Howard

Armand Aucamp

Austin

Nicole Bailey

Cala

Dolby Digital/SDDS

In Colour

[1.85:1]

### Distributor

20th Century Fox

International (UK)

7,500 ft +0 frames



Helping hand: Mark Wahlberg

**SYNOPSIS** The US, present day. Bullied by his schoolmates and his alcoholic ex-fireman father, and worried about his mother who is dying of cancer, teenager Andrew decides to start videotaping his life.

One night Andrew and his cousin Matt (his only friend) go to a party where Andrew is approached by popular jock Steve, who takes him to a hole in the ground that periodically emits a strange sound. Andrew, Steve and Matt enter the hole, where they find a glowing, apparently radioactive object which destroys Andrew's camera. Some days later the boys discover that they have developed telekinetic powers. They form a close bond as they realise the full extent of what they can do. Matt and Steve become concerned about Andrew, who is clearly the strongest of the three.

Andrew becomes bitter and withdrawn, until his anger leads him to kill Steve accidentally. He begins stealing money to pay for his mother's medication, but ends up in hospital when a hold-up goes wrong. His father visits him in hospital and tells him that his mother has died. Andrew sets off an explosion in the hospital, tries to drop his father from the top of the building, then goes on a rampage through the city. Matt attempts to reason with Andrew and the two start to fight, destroying everything in their path. Eventually Matt is forced to kill Andrew.

Matt goes trekking in Tibet, fulfilling Andrew's dream of travelling the world.



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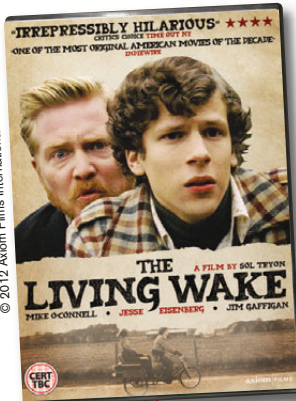


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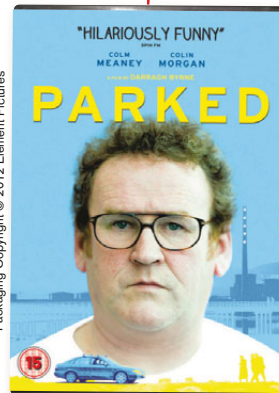


the living wake  
released 26/03/12

£10

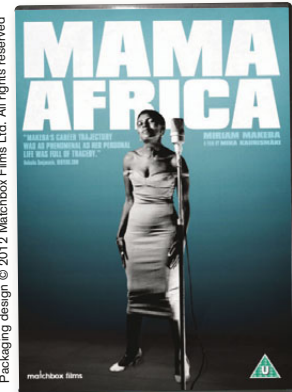
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International Film Guide  
2012

the definitive annual review of world cinema  
edited by Ian Haydn Smith

48th edition

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48th Edition

PUBLISHED IN MARCH

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– Wout Thielemans, *moviescope*



## CREDITS

### Produced by

Tim Bevan  
Eric Fellner  
Baltasar Kormákur  
Stephen Levinson  
Mark Wahlberg  
**Screenplay**  
Aaron Guzikowski  
Based upon the film  
*Reykjavik-Rotterdam*  
written by Arnaldur  
Indri\*ð\*ason, Óskar  
Jónasson

### Director of

### Photography

Barry Ackroyd

### Editor

Elisabet Ronalds

### Production Designer

Tony Fanning

### Music

Clinton Shorter

### Sound Supervisor

Danny Sheehan

### Costume Designer

Jenny Eagan

### Stunt Co-ordinator

Darrin Prescott

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### Production

### Companies

Universal Pictures  
presents in association  
with Relativity Media a  
Working Title  
production in  
association with  
Blueeys/Leverage/Clo  
sest to the Hole  
Productions  
A Baltasar Kormákur  
film  
In association with  
Dentsu Inc.

### Executive Producers

Liza Chasin  
Evan Hayes  
Bill Johnson

## CAST

**Mark Wahlberg**

Chris Farraday

**Kate Beckinsale**

Kate Farraday

**Ben Foster**

Sebastian Abney

**Giovanni Ribisi**

Tim Briggs

**Caleb Landry Jones**

Andy

**J.K. Simmons**

Captain Camp

**Robert Wahlberg**

John Bryce

**Jason Mitchell**

Walter

**Diego Luna**

Gonzalo

**Dolby Digital/**

**Datastat/SDDS**

**In Colour**

[2.35:1]

**Distributor**

Universal Pictures

International UK & Eire

9,865 ft +8 frames

# Corman's World Exploits of a Hollywood Rebel

USA 2011

Director: Alex Stapleton

As each successive pop-culture generation anoints its own marker for the beginning of cinema (*Star Wars* for some, *Pulp Fiction* for others), it's perfectly plausible that the contribution and influence of Roger Corman will be overlooked. Martin Scorsese suggests as much in the documentary *Corman's World: Exploits of a Hollywood Rebel*. Scorsese, who made *Boxcar Bertha* under Corman's auspices at AIP (American International Pictures) in 1972, is one of a roster of necessarily impressive names – including Jack Nicholson, Peter Bogdanovich and Robert De Niro – interviewed here about their big breaks. Scorsese recalls how Corman offered to finance *Mean Streets* (1973) if it was cast entirely with African-American actors, the better to cash in on the blaxploitation boom. That's him, all chutzpah and acumen.

Much of the material here will be familiar, but then *Corman's World* works best as a primer. Most buffs know Corman's life story better than their own – from backroom boy and neglected script-reader at 20th Century Fox, he knocked off genre cheapies for AIP and identified an incipient youth market for which few other filmmakers were catering. Eclectic is too small a word for the scope of his enthusiasms. But energy, resourcefulness and undying allegiance to genre pleasures united such apparently diverse productions as *Little Shop of Horrors*, *The Wild Angels*, *Bloody Mama* and his early-1960s run of overripe Edgar Allan Poe adaptations.

Any concern that the documentary's plentiful footage from the set of *Dinoshark* (a 2010 monster movie made for the Syfy channel) will dwarf more significant achievements should be allayed by the attention given to Corman's 1962 racial-segregation drama *The Intruder*. Although that picture has been little seen, then and now, it gets as much screen time here as commercial high-points such as *The Wild Angels* or *The Trip*, presumably because it corroborates the portrait of Corman as multifaceted (admiring mention is made too of his distribution of films by European arthouse giants). Corman's pride at having self-financed something as serious as *The Intruder* must also account for its prominence here – this is nothing if not a documentary that reeks of its subject's approval.

No one would want or expect a hatchet job on a figure whose contribution to cinema is predominantly positive, but it could only have benefited the film if room had been found for the occasional dissenting voice. Jonathan Demme has spoken of the strikingly competitive atmosphere among newcomers in the Corman stable ("On the day I screened



Rebel without a budget: Roger Corman

[*Crazy Mama*],” he told me in 2004, “one of the film’s editors handed over to Roger a set of notes detailing what he would have done with the movie”). And there have been accusations over the years that genre wasn’t the only thing Corman exploited. The movie’s one nod in this direction comes from the late Paul Bartel. “He exploits directors, he exploits writers...” says Bartel in an archive clip, “but we also exploit Roger.”

The chief attraction of *Corman's World* is the calibre of the new

interviewees, some of whom (David Carradine, George Hickenlooper, Polly Platt) have died since the film was completed. John Sayles holds court on a stoop, Ron Howard wanders unidentified suburban streets, Bruce Dern gets his bright white hair cut. Jack Nicholson pays due obeisance, cursing *Star Wars* (which duplicated the Corman formula in all but budget) and sobbing in gratitude, a sight no less moving for the actor’s refusal to remove his shades.

◆◆ Ryan Gilbey

## CREDITS

### Produced by

Stone Douglass  
Mickey Barold  
Alex Stapleton  
Jeffrey Frey  
Izabela Frank

### Director of

### Photography

Patrick Simpson

### Edited by

Victor Livingston

Philip Owens

### Music

Air

### Production Sound

Mixer

Mark Patino

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### Production

### Companies

A&E Indiefilms presents a Far Hills/Stick N Stone production in association with Gallant Films  
**Executive Producers**  
Molly Thompson  
Robert DeBietto  
Robert Sharenow  
Jared Moshe  
Rich Lim  
Joshua Ray Levin  
Taylor Materne  
Polly Platt  
Antonio Von Hildebrand

### Film Extracts

*Monster from the Ocean Floor* (1954)  
*The Fast and the Furious* (1955)  
*Apache Woman* (1955)  
*Not of This Earth* (1957)  
*It Conquered the World* (1956)  
*The Undead* (1957)  
*The Cry Baby Killer* (1958)  
*Love Finds Andy Hardy* (1938)  
*The Wild Ride* (1960)  
*Teenage Doll* (1957)  
*Rock All Night* (1957)  
*Sorority Girl* (1957)  
*A Bucket of Blood* (1959)  
*Little Shop of Horrors* (1960)  
*House of Usher* (1960)  
*The Pit and the Pendulum* (1961)  
*The Masque of the Red Death* (1964)  
*The Tomb of Ligeia* (1964)  
*The Raven* (1963)  
*The Terror* (1963)  
*The Intruder* (1962)  
*The Wild Angels* (1966)  
*Gill Women of Venus* (1968)  
*The Trip* (1967)  
*Easy Rider* (1969)  
*Bloody Mama* (1970)

*Boxcar Bertha* (1972)  
*Hollywood Boulevard* (1976)  
*Jackson County Jail* (1976)  
*The Woman Hunt* (1972)  
*The Hot Box* (1972)  
*Rock 'n' Roll High School* (1979)  
*Grand Theft Auto* (1977)  
*Death Race 2000* (1975)  
*Cover Girl Models* (1974)  
*The Big Bird Cage* (1972)  
*The Final Comedown* (1972)  
*Mean Streets* (1973)  
*Viskningar och rop* (1972)  
*Amarcord* (1972)  
*Jaws* (1975)

## WITH

Paul W.S. Anderson  
Allan Arkush  
Eric Balfour  
Paul Bartel  
Peter Bogdanovich  
Bob Burns  
David Carradine  
Gene Corman  
Julie Corman  
Roger Corman  
Joe Dante

Jonathan Demme  
Robert De Niro  
Bruce Dern  
Frances Doel  
Peter Fonda  
Pam Grier  
Jonathan Haze  
George Hickenlooper  
Ron Howard  
Gale Anne Hurd  
Jonathan Kaplan  
Irvin Kershner  
Todd McCarthy  
Dick Miller  
Jack Nicholson  
Polly Platt  
Eli Roth  
John Sayles  
Martin Scorsese  
William Shatner  
Tom Sherak  
Penelope Spheeris  
Quentin Tarantino  
Gary Tunncliffe  
Mary Woronov  
Jim Wynorski

In Colour/Black and White  
[1.85:1]

Distributor  
104 Films





Heavens above: Yile Vianello

## Corpo celeste

Italy/France/Switzerland 2011  
Director: Alice Rohrwacher

It's bound to be difficult to fit in if you're the new kid in town, your older sister makes fun of you and you're about to come of age – which is exactly the point at which we're introduced to 13-year-old Marta, the protagonist of Italian filmmaker Alice Rohrwacher's first feature *Corpo celeste*. After growing up in Switzerland, Marta has just moved back to a working-class neighbourhood in a city in the south of Italy with her mother and adolescent sister. In order to help her integrate into this close-knit community, she is sent to confirmation classes. It's a period in her life that will mark her swift transition to adulthood, filling her with unanswered questions as she tries to make sense of herself, religion and her own place in the world.

For the most part, events unfold from Marta's point of view, Yile Vianello's beautifully contained performance and DP Hélène Louvart's predominantly handheld camera combining to capture that certain serenity and introversion that come from being forced into the position of outsider and observer at an early age. In fact, Vianello's incarnation of Marta becomes even more compelling with the knowledge that the non-professional actress comes from a very small town in the mountains with no electricity, and her involvement in the film meant it was the first time she had visited a city.

But with little more than observation of Marta's awakening to the world to propel the narrative forward, *Corpo celeste* soon becomes slightly repetitive and obvious (Marta has her first period, she cuts her hair short), despite the calculated interpolation of an abrupt, gratuitous scene of violence – the bashing of a plastic bag full of kittens against a pavement – and the locals' odd everyday activities. In fact, this is precisely where Rohrwacher seems to lose her grip, as the widening gap between her sensitive, subtle portrayal of Marta and the well-observed yet largely superficial depiction of this

community tips the film off balance.

This is made more obvious by Louvart's grainy cinematography (she's also worked with Wim Wenders, Christophe Honoré and Agnès Varda). Although it emphatically highlights the contrast between the ugly greyness of the urban space and the beautiful natural surroundings, it also depicts the clash between Marta and the locals with the same studied detachment, so that the girl's personal search feels precious and poised in comparison with the community's seemingly unquestioning embrace of tradition and (often absurd) efforts to make religion alluring to the younger generation (a pop dance, a neon crucifix).

The overall effect is condescending and reductive, the locals amounting to little more than two-dimensional clichés, further exaggerated by affected performances – an impression reinforced by Fellini-esque humour (a religious parade interrupted by the priest answering his mobile, a crucifix being transported à la *La dolce vita*), albeit minus Fellini's decidedly satirical bite. With no real attempt to understand these characters, the region as a whole is construed from Marta's outsider's point of view as backwards, racist and corrupt, rendering *Corpo celeste* as judgemental and arguable as the shortsighted parochialism it seems to be criticising.

♦♦ Mar Diestro-Dópido

### CREDITS

**Produced by**  
Carlo Cresto-Dina  
Jacques Bidou  
Marianne Dumoulin  
Tiziana Soudani  
**Written by**  
Alice Rohrwacher  
**Director of Photography**  
Hélène Louvart  
**Editor**  
Marco Spoletini  
**Art Director**  
Luca Servino  
**Sound Recordist**  
Emanuele Cecere  
**Costume Designer**  
Loredana Buscemi

©Tempesta srl, JBA  
Production, AMKA  
Films Productions.

ARTE France Cinéma,  
RSI Radiotelevisione  
svizzera, SRG SSR idée  
suisse  
**Production Companies**  
Tempesta and Rai  
Cinema present a  
Tempesta, JBA  
Production, AMKA  
Films Productions  
production  
In collaboration with Rai  
Cinema  
In co-production with  
Arte France Cinéma,  
RSI Radiotelevisione  
Svizzera, SRG SSR Idée  
Suisse  
With the participation of  
Arte France, Cineteca di  
Bologna  
With contributions from  
Fondazione Calabria

Film Commission,  
Regione Calabria  
With the support of  
Ministero per i beni e la  
Attività Culturali

### CAST

**Yile Vianello**  
Marta  
**Salvatore Cantalupo**  
Don Mario  
**Pasqualina Scuncia**  
Santa  
**Anita Caprioli**  
Rita  
**Renato Carpentieri**  
Don Lorenzo  
**Maria Trunfio**  
Deborah  
**Paola Lavina**  
Fortunato  
**Gianni Federico**  
Nino

**Maria Luisa de Crescenzo**  
Rosa  
**Mario Canino**  
Alfri  
**Monia Alfieri**  
Donatella  
**Licia Amodéo**  
Flavia

**Dolby Digital**  
**In Colour**  
[1.85:1]  
Subtitles

**Distributor**  
Artificial Eye Film  
Company

**SYNOPSIS** Italy, the present. Thirteen-year-old Marta and her 18-year-old sister have moved back to Calabria from Switzerland, where Marta grew up. In an attempt to help Marta integrate, her mother enrolls her in preparations for confirmation in the local parish. During practice at the church, Marta is unable to answer a question and gets a slap from volunteer Santa. Marta storms out and cuts off her hair. Santa has a crush on Don Mario, the local priest. Marta plays with kittens hidden in the vestry, but Santa puts them in a plastic bag and gives them to one of the older kids to get rid of. He hits them against the pavement and throws them over a bridge. Marta goes to look for them but can't find them. Don Mario sees her and takes her with him to a nearby abandoned town to help him borrow the crucifix from the local church. When they stop for lunch she gets her first period. In the town they bump into the local priest, who tells Marta that Christ was angry and considered mad. On the way back, Marta asks Don Mario about this; shocked, he brakes so hard that the crucifix falls over a bridge into the sea. Marta gets ready for the confirmation celebration; when one of the local women starts gossiping about her, her sister pushes the woman and tells her to shut up. Marta leaves the celebration and joins some gypsy children on the beach.

## Ghost Rider Spirit of Vengeance

USA/United Arab Emirates 2012  
Directors: Nevelidine/Taylor  
Certificate 12A 95m 24s

Oddly, Patrick Lussier's Nicolas Cage vehicle *Drive Angry* (2011) felt more like a Ghost Rider movie than either of the official outings for Marvel's demon biker hero, who has been somewhat inhibited on film by the need to secure a family-friendly rating despite Johnny Blaze's status as one of the darker Marvel characters.

This not-quite-a-reboot retains Cage as Johnny Blaze from Mark Steven Johnson's 2007 *Ghost Rider* but otherwise starts more or less from scratch, dispensing with a supporting cast and most of the mythology. Peter Fonda's Mephisto – Marvel's distinctive version of the Devil, who has bothered the Silver Surfer, Spider-Man and others – is replaced in *Spirit of Vengeance* by a big-chinned, glowering Ciarán Hinds as Mr Roarke (evoking the Ricardo Montalban character from *Fantasy Island*).

The 1970s run of the Ghost Rider comics, primary source for the film version, was a bizarre mash-up of Evel Knievel, *Death Wish* and *The Exorcist*. Whereas Johnson carried over the comics' distinctive modern-western/road-movie backdrop, *Spirit of Vengeance* favours trips to Romania and Turkey, which allows for some ancient ritual sites but also gives the film the flavour of shot-on-the-cheap-in-Eastern-Europe quickies such as the *Subspecies* or *Bloodstone* series. The new film is, moreover, stuck with a knock-off antichrist plot focusing on Danny, a young lad spawned on his mother Nadya (Violante Placido) – this year's Olga Kurylenko) by the Devil incarnate as a future vessel for his evil spirit. Meanwhile Nadya's rotten ex-boyfriend Carrigan (Johnny Whitworth – this year's Dermot Mulroney wannabe) is transformed into albino vampire type Blackout, whose touch sends people into a dark place where flesh and other material decays to nothing – but who still isn't any use when it comes to tangling with the flaming-skull hero, registering as even less of a threat than Wes Bentley's feeble infernal pretender last time out.

*Ghost Rider* was always a fine series of covers, splash pages and panels rather than a great comic, but this fails even to rise to the middling watermark of Johnson's film in matching its imagery, despite 3D chains, the fiery-socketed 'penance stare', a cooler/darker/edgier look for the flaming skull, and *Crank* boys Mark Nevelidine and Brian Taylor as directors.

The major problem is a duff script by TV writers Scott M. Gimple and Seth Hoffman, from a story by comics specialist David S. Goyer (who has had a hand in the *Blade* and *Batman* franchises and even wrote the David Hasselhoff *Nick Fury: Agent of SHIELD* TV movie),





Blazing saddle: 'Ghost Rider Spirit of Vengeance'

which slings together an insultingly mouldy set of plot conventions – yet another conflicted antichrist, more useless monks (plot-explaining good guy abbot Anthony Head and facially tattooed maniac abbot Christopher Lambert get about the same amount of screen time before being summarily killed off), and a running joke about Idris Elba's wine drinking (his only character trait). The Ghost Rider's powers vary from scene to scene, and he even has a *Superman II*-like spell of being the ordinary bloke he always

wanted to be just as it turns out he needs to be demon-possessed after all. But the character suffers from having a power-set so extreme he can shrug off super-bazooka shells, which means he has to be opposed by thugs too stupid to stop firing useless rounds and head for the hills (a frequent *Superman* problem), suggesting that the Devil finds it impossible to recruit decent help. Cage is lean but inexpressive, even when his head isn't digitally replaced with a burning skull.

◆◆ Kim Newman

## CREDITS

**Directed by**  
Neveeldine/Taylor  
[i.e. Mark Neveeldine  
Brian Taylor]

**Produced by**  
Steven Paul  
Ashok Amritraj  
Michael De Luca  
Avi Arad  
Ari Arad

**Screenplay**  
Scott M. Gimple  
Seth Hoffman  
David S. Goyer  
**Story**  
David S. Goyer  
Based on the Marvel  
comic

**Director of  
Photography**  
Brandon Trost  
**Edited by**  
Brian Berdan  
**Production Designer**  
Kevin Phipps  
**Music**

David Sardy  
**Sound Designer**  
Steve Iushar  
**Costume Designer**  
Bojana Nikitovic  
**Visual Effects**  
Iloura  
Additional:  
Anibrain  
Prasad Ltd  
Evil Eye Pictures  
Pixel Magic  
**Stunt Co-ordinator**  
Markos Rountiwaite

©Columbia Pictures  
Industries, Inc.  
**Production  
Companies**  
Hyde Park  
Entertainment and  
Imagination Abu Dhabi  
and Columbia Pictures  
present in association  
with Crystal Sky  
Pictures and Marvel  
Entertainment

An Ashok Amritraj  
Michael De Luca  
Arad production  
**Executive Producers**  
E. Bennett Walsh  
David S. Goyer  
Stan Lee  
Mark Steven Johnson

## CAST

**Nicolas Cage**  
Johnny Blaze, 'Ghost  
Rider'  
**Ciarán Hinds**  
Roarke  
**Violante Placido**  
Nadya  
**Fergus Riordan**  
Danny  
**Johnny Whitworth**  
Ray Carrigan  
**Christopher Lambert**  
Methodius  
**Idris Elba**  
Moreau  
**Anthony Head**  
Benedict

**Jacek Koman**  
Terrokov  
**Vincent Regan**  
Toma Nikasevic  
**Sorin Tofan**  
Kurdish  
**Spencer Wilding**  
Grannik

**Dolby Digital/  
Datasat/SDDS  
In Colour  
Prints by  
DeLuxe  
[2.35:1]**

**Some screenings  
presented in 3D**

**Distributor**  
E1 Films

**8,586 ft +0 frames**



Heartbreak fridge: Aksel Hennie

## Headhunters

Norway/Denmark/Germany 2011

Director: Morten Tyldum

The US remake rights for *Headhunters* were reputedly sold on the strength of just 30 minutes of this first adaptation of Norwegian crime novelist Jo Nesbø's work, a sleekly plotted, unnerving 1980s yuppie-in-peril thriller updated to an apocalyptic corporate age. English language apart, it already has every populist virtue Hollywood once claimed for itself.

"All I've inherited is bad genes," Roger Brown (Aksel Hennie) tells us in voiceover as he pads through his luxury apartment to greet Amazonian wife Diana (Synnøve Macody Lund), who towers over his puny five-foot-six frame. Roger, an overcompensating rake with a Napoleon complex, works as a top headhunter for a Norwegian

corporation, ruthlessly toying with squirming interviewees while also extracting details of their art collections, which he robs with cool precision to fund the indulgences he showers on the wife he's desperate to keep. *Headhunters* describes his at first inexplicable fall, until this determinedly self-possessed professional is running through a wood, frightened, naked and covered in shit.

His nemesis is charismatic Clas Greve (Nikolaj Coster-Waldau), a potential recruit from a rival firm. Roger circles him like a real fellow alpha male – until, during the attempted robbery of a Rubens from Clas's apartment, he discovers Diana's ringing phone, left after an assignment. The familiar adventures of a slick if seemingly miscast gentleman-thief in this first reel (all its American buyers apparently saw) then vertiginously drop away, as Roger falls through a narrative rabbit-hole into nightmare terrain, the special forces-trained Clas relentlessly hunting him across country like a corporate

**SYNOPSIS** Norway, present day. Roger Brown is a recruitment specialist for the Pathfinder corporation, with a sideline as an art thief to fund wife Diana's expensive tastes. Accosted by girlfriend Lotte, he dumps her. He meets Clas Greve, and tries to poach him for his firm. Clas lets slip that he owns a painting by Rubens, which Roger plots to steal with his accomplice Ove. Roger and Diana row about her wish for a child. Raiding Clas's flat for the Rubens, Roger discovers Diana's phone and realises that she is having an affair with Clas. He tells Clas that he will block his recruitment to Pathfinder. The next morning Roger finds Ove, apparently dead, in his garage. Ove revives, but they argue at Ove's home, and Roger accidentally kills him. Clas appears outside.

Roger escapes to a farmhouse but Clas follows and kills the farmer. After a chase, Roger awakes in hospital, and is arrested for the farmer's murder by police, who think he is Ove. Clas forces the police car off a cliff. Realising that Clas has tracked him through microscopic transmitters in his hair, Roger cuts its off. He seeks refuge with Lotte, who reveals that Clas needed the job to destroy Pathfinder for a rival. She is part of the plot, and Roger kills her in a fight. Roger tells Diana what has happened. He lures Clas to Ove's house, which is rigged with CCTV, and kills him in an exchange of gunfire. Roger keeps his face hidden, so the CCTV footage apparently shows Clas and Ove's deaths. A chastened Roger resumes life with a pregnant Diana.

**SYNOPSIS** Eastern Europe, the present. Renegade priest Moreau saves young Danny and his mother Nadya from an assault on a monastery by mercenaries led by Carrigan, a thug working for the mysterious Mr Roarke, who wants to secure the boy.

Motorcycle stunt rider Johnny Blaze once sold his soul to the Devil, who now walks the earth in human form as Roarke. Possessed by the demon Zarathos, Johnny is cursed to become a flaming skeleton (Ghost Rider) in the presence of evil and wreak vengeance on evil men. Moreau asks Johnny to act as bodyguard for Danny and Nadya, fending off Carrigan until the boy can be entrusted to Methodius, leader of an ancient order of monks. Johnny learns that Danny is Roarke's son.

The Devil intends to abandon his failing human form and possess the boy, who has been bred to contain demonic powers without burning out. In a skirmish, Johnny – in his Ghost Rider form – overcomes Carrigan and nearly kills him. Roarke revives Carrigan, giving him the power to spread decay with his touch. Moreau and Johnny entrust Danny to Methodius, and Moreau fulfils his part of the bargain by exorcising Zarathos from Johnny. Johnny and Moreau discover that Methodius intends to kill the boy to prevent the Devil from gaining more powers, but both monks are destroyed by Roarke and Danny is spirited away to Turkey.

Realising that he can't abandon his mission, Johnny lets Zarathos possess him once more. He defeats Carrigan and Roarke, and saves Danny.



clone of *The Hitcher's* Rutger Hauer.

Classically framed long shots of tourist-board woodland idylls give way to intimately observed chaos and terror, as director Morten Tyldum adopts the gleeful horror-comic logic of early Sam Raimi or Tobe Hooper. Roger's drop into the shit-pool under an isolated cabin's outhouse isn't the low-point of his demented flight (which he at one point attempts on a slowly chugging tractor), for worse is still to come. He wakes in a hospital's antiseptic calm and is led away by police, only for Clas, now channelling Spielberg's *Duel*, to plough into them in a truck. Reduced to his raw state, naked and near-dead, hair crudely hacked off, Roger by now resembles a bandaged, bleeding down-and-out.

After this hysterical excursion into horror, Tyldum and his writers return to the quieter wreck of Roger's marriage. When Diana stands behind him before his flight she looms like a physical threat, and when she strokes balm (or is it?) into his ravaged head on his return it seems a further act of betrayal. Roger's emotional transformation after his weekend in hell separates him from Clas, who pointedly embodies the sociopathic nature of corporate climbers ("I would like to know," Roger wonders, "if people like you really exist... without empathy?"). Hennie shows us the panic beneath the smooth surface of another kind of company man, while his director delivers a satisfyingly complex, thrilling and distinctive crowd-pleaser.

👉 Nick Hasted

## CREDITS

### Produced by

Asle Vatn  
Marianne Gray  
**Screenplay**  
Ulf Ryberg  
Lars Gudmestad  
Based on a novel  
[*Hodejegerne*] by Jo Nesbø

### Director of

**Photography**  
John Andreas Andersen

### Edited by

Vidar Flataukan

### Production Design

Nina Bjørch-Andersen

### Original Music

Trond Bjerknes

### Sound Design

Tormod Ringnes

### Costume Design

Karen Fabritius Gram

©Yellow Bird Norge AS,  
Friland Film AS, Nordisk  
Film A/S, Degeto Film  
GmbH

### Production

### Companies

Yellow Bird and Friland  
Film present a co-  
production with Nordisk  
Film and Degeto Film  
In co-operation with  
TV2, SVT and DR  
With support from  
Norwegian Film  
Institute, Nordisk Film  
og TV-Fond  
Developed with the  
support of the MEDIA  
Programme of the  
European Community  
**Executive Producers**  
Anni Faurbye Fernandez  
Ole Sandberg  
Mikael Wallén  
Christian Fredrik Martin

## CAST

### Aksel Hennie

Roger Brown  
**Nikolaj Coster-Waldau**  
Clas Greve  
**Synnøve Macody Lund**  
Diana Brown

### Eivind Sander

Ove Kjellerud  
**Julie Ølgaard**  
Lotte

### Kyrre Haugen Sydness

Lander  
**Valentina Alexeeva**  
Natasja

### Reidar Sørensen

Brede Sperre

### Nils Jørgen Kalstad

Stig

### Joachim Rafaelsen

Brugd

### Dolby Digital

### In Colour

[2.35:1]

### Subtitles

### Distributor

Momentum Pictures

Norwegian theatrical  
title

**Hodejegerne**

# How to Re-establish a Vodka Empire

United Kingdom 2011

Director: Daniel Edelstyn

With its cute, jokey reconstructions of rape, pillage and displacement, Daniel Edelstyn's film of his own efforts to recharge a family business lost during the Bolshevik Revolution depicts Russian history as a tattered, thrilling picture book – and a neat marketing opportunity. The film came about when filmmaker Edelstyn discovered a journal kept by his White Russian grandmother Maroussia at the time of her escape from her homeland; travelling to the depressed town of Dubouviavovka in Ukraine to explore her story, he found the vodka distillery his ancestors once owned and determined to revive its fortunes.

One of the experts Edelstyn consults in his planning process, a professor of Jewish history, warns him against exploiting the imagery of 1917 to create romantic resonance, saying "You wouldn't sell beer using a swastika... Think of the tens of millions of dead." But this argument seemingly holds less appeal for Edelstyn than the enthusiastic gushings of a Saatchi & Saatchi marketing head who's "really into dynamic micro-brands", finds the concept of Ukrainian vodka "fascinating" and proclaims that "authenticity's massively important, and this is dripping with it".

It isn't, of course: Edelstyn's product isn't even the same vodka made in the factory once owned by his family, but a whole new blend. But the irony of creating a luxury lifestyle brand out of a story of punctured privilege and mass death never quite seems to click with Edelstyn: his infatuation with the idea of graceful, cultured White Russians beset by grisly Bolshevik thugs keeps more complex political ideas firmly at bay, and he's unabashed about aligning the awkwardness of trying to fund a whimsical small business with the travails of losing house and home and fleeing death by firing squad. (His meeting with the director of Dubouviavovka, to get his backing to export the vodka, is cheerfully intercut with reconstructions of Maroussia's efforts to acquire fake papers and get out of Russia.)

It's a shame that Edelstyn has taken such a gratingly flippant tone, because Maroussia's diary is evidently a riveting, beautifully written document of extreme privilege and extreme loss; and the idea of reviving stricken ex-Soviet communities by way of the luxury-goods market is a potentially interesting one, replete with its own resonant ironies. But Edelstyn, easily spooked, backs off from investigating the stories of the Ukrainian townspeople: let someone discourage him from filming somewhere, or say something critical about his hat, and he's off with his tail between his legs.



A neat idea: Hilary Powell, Daniel Edelstyn

The doorstepping boldness of a Moore or a Broomfield is distinctly lacking, so informed analysis of the fates of towns such as Dubouviavovka is replaced by those fanciful reconstructions and a lot of cutesy me-at-home-in-my-Hackney-warehouse-worrying stuff. There's nothing dislikeable about Edelstyn, his wife, their beloved Border collie or their Hackney warehouse, but he's erred in assuming that he is the most interesting part of the story; and emphasising his own haplessness rather compounds the impression that this is a dilettantish vanity project rather than a serious engagement with either family history or the vagaries of the booze business.

Some of the film's most engaging moments play on the tension between Edelstyn's crew and the Ukrainian locals in Dubouviavovka ("They do understand what we're saying," grumbles one old man to the translator, "they're lying"), but not enough about this relationship is explored; and we don't even learn how Edelstyn plans for his business to benefit the town, except in an aside at the end of the film which notes that the town hasn't seen any profit as yet.

👉 Hannah McGill

## CREDITS

### Produced by

Daniel Edelstyn  
Hilary Powell  
Christopher Hird

### Written by

Daniel Edelstyn

### Film Editor

John Mister

### Production Designer

Hilary Powell

### Music

Andrew Skeet

### Sound

Documentary Unit:  
Hilary Powell

©Ukrainian Odyssey  
Films Ltd

### Production

### Companies

Dartmouth Films and  
Optimistic Productions  
present a film by Daniel  
Edelstyn and Hilary  
Powell

Made with the financial  
support of Channel Four  
Television, Scottish  
Documentary Institute,  
Shoreline Charitable  
Trust, The Spiro Ark,  
WorldView Broadcast  
Media Scheme

### Executive Producers

Christopher Hird  
Rachel Wexler

## CAST

### Hilary Powell

Maroussia

### Daniel Edelstyn

Max

### Conrad Asquith

Great Grandfather Ilya

### Anthony Styles

the evil Bolshevik

Stepanovich

### Esmé Edelstyn

baby George Edelstyn

### Yana Dolin

voice of Maroussia

Zorokovich

### In Colour

[1.85:1]

### Part-subtitled

### Distributor

Dartmouth Films

**SYNOPSIS** London, the present. Filmmaker Daniel Edelstyn discovers a diary kept by his White Russian grandmother Maroussia Zorokovich at the time of her escape from her revolution-torn homeland. With his wife Hilary, Daniel visits the depressed Ukrainian town of Dubouviavovka, where Maroussia's father owned a vodka distillery that is still in operation. He develops the idea of reinvigorating the family business. Dramatic reconstructions from Maroussia's diary tell of the family's standoff against the Bolsheviks and eventual flight to the United Kingdom. Daniel meets with vodka experts, potential investors and stockists, planning a luxury brand that will capitalise on the romance of Maroussia's story and bring profit to the people of Dubouviavovka. The financial outlay is almost unmanageable, the product is of indifferent quality and interest from supporters proves variable; but Daniel hits on a marketable new recipe, which Selfridges agrees to sell. Meanwhile Hilary discovers that she is pregnant, and the couple welcome their first child, Esme. Daniel traces Maroussia's story to Belfast, where she died, and arranges a headstone for her unmarked grave. At the launch party for Zorokovich 1917 vodka, he toasts his grandmother.





Partial recall: Tuva Novotny

# IDA

Denmark/The Netherlands/  
Sweden 2011

Director: Christian E. Christiansen

Certificate 15 104m 29s

Slick, bloody, female-fronted and steadfastly joke-free, this Danish thriller adheres neatly to certain conventions of the Scandinavian crime craze, which doubtless explains its appeal to a UK distributor. It's a simpler and narrower endeavour than Stieg Larsson's *Millennium* trilogy or the television hit *The Killing*, however, with its vague political trappings providing little more than set dressing for its heroine's nailbiting travails. We don't find out much about the politics of the group making life difficult for our amnesiac protagonist (Tuva Novotny), except that they are pro-Palestine and arm Middle Eastern terrorist groups; nor do we establish whether she knew about or shared her husband's convictions before her memory loss, or how exactly a Baader-Meinhof-style underground radical has come to embrace a career as a very famous and prosperous opera singer with a home full of unradically sumptuous goods. By aligning the viewer's discoveries firmly with those of the amnesiac Aliena/Ida, Tine Krull Petersen's script is forced into an efficient but sometimes frustrating leanness; with the protagonist unable to place events in context, plot information must be presented and processed rapidly as it becomes relevant.

If a solemn, socially conscious thriller is doing battle here with a breathy woman-in-jeopardy melodrama, the latter decisively wins out; this is pointed up by the fact that the narrative propels Ida towards a romantic tryst rather than a resolution of the moral and political mess left by her husband and brother. Indeed, when Ida finds herself inexplicably in possession of millions of euros in cash, her first impulse is to get herself to a boutique and kit herself out in new frocks and shoes – partly her plan to foil the pursuers who have mistaken her for a boy, but partly the film's plan to indulge viewers' femme-fatale

fashion fantasies. Ida's experiments with 'drag' – black bob wig, heavy make-up, oddly garish clothes for someone seeking a low profile – are echoed in the minor character of Rosie, a transvestite Good Samaritan who helps Ida out as she's fleeing her husband, on the basis that 'us girls have to stick together'. Femininity spells vulnerability, but it can also be a passive-aggressive defence: Ida only escapes because her pursuers, unable to fathom that someone physically strong and androgynously clothed might be female, take her for a man.

Such hints add texture to otherwise smoothly generic plotting – but they also invite the interpretation that politics is men's business, whereas women are driven by image and

emotion. The film's preoccupation with surface style sometimes comes at the cost of originality: several of its neatest moments are lifts from other tales of disguise and double-crossing, among them *Mulholland Dr.* (Ida lifts her assumed name from a wine bottle), *The Long Kiss Goodnight* (innocent kitchen chopping triggers gory memories) and *Trainspotting* (Ida leaves a surprise gift for her most selfless helper before commencing her new life). But if the directorial style tends towards the flashy and referential, Novotny's lead performance is all taut severity; she's a strong screen presence whose work lends emotional ballast to a film that otherwise doesn't quite know how silly it wants to be.

♥ Hannah McGill

## CREDITS

**Produced by**  
Louise Vesth  
**Written by**  
Tine Krull Petersen  
Based on the novel *På knivens æg* by Anne Chaplin Hansen  
**Director of Photography**  
Ian Hansen  
**Editor**  
Bodil Kjærnhauge  
**Art Director**  
Thomas Greve  
**Music**  
Kristian Eidnes Anderson  
**Sound Design**  
Eddie Simonsen  
**Costume Designer**

Rebecca Richmond  
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Entertainments10  
**Production Companies**  
Zentropa  
Entertainments10  
presents  
With support from Det Danske Filminstitut, TV2 Danmark, Rotterdam Media Fund  
In co-operation with Filmfyn  
In co-production with Holland Harbour, Film I Väst  
With the support of MEDIA Programme of the European Union  
**Executive Producers**

Marie Gade  
Peter Aalbak Jensen  
Peter Garde

## CAST

**Tuva Novotny**  
Ida Ore, 'Aliena'  
**Flemming Enevold**  
Just Ore  
**Carsten Bjørnlund**  
Martin  
**Arnau Binard**  
Pierre  
**Rogier Philipoom**  
Guus  
**John Buijsman**  
Rob  
**Jens Jørn Spottag**  
HP  
**Marie-Louise Wille**  
Mariette

**Françoise Lebrun**  
Isabelle  
**Koen Wouterse**  
Tim  
**Simon van Lammeren**  
Johan  
**Josef Tödttling**  
Henk  
**Finn Nielsen**  
Rosie

**Dolby Digital**  
**In Colour**  
**[2.35:1]**  
**Subtitles**

**Distributor**  
Artificial Eye Film Company  
**9,403 ft +8 frames**

**SYNOPSIS** Rural France, the present. A woman wakes in a stream with a head wound and no memory. Checking into a hotel under the name 'Aliena', she finds a fortune in banknotes and a gun in her bag, and a freshly stitched scar in her abdomen. News reports tell of a major bank robbery, and the murder of leftist politician Ugo Marshall. Men come to the hotel asking about new guests; the proprietor's son Pierre protects 'Aliena' by taking her to his home, where she cuts and dyes her hair. They determine that her first language is Danish. She makes plans to return to Denmark.

Back in Copenhagen, 'Aliena' discovers that she is Ida Ore, wife of famed singer Just Ore, and that her husband is involved with a leftwing terrorist group, as is her brother Martin, who has gone missing following a split in the movement. Just is initially loving, but upon discovering Pierre's card in her luggage, he becomes jealous and beats Ida up. Her memory returns: in flashback we see that Just stabbed her while she was pregnant, causing her to lose her baby. She fled to her brother, who was himself on the run with stolen funds from the radical cell; he planned to redirect the money to his lover, Ugo Marshall. Ida and Martin went to Ugo's house in France, but he was dead; Just and his men pursued them and killed Martin. Ida, carrying the money, fell into the stream, losing consciousness.

Back in the present, Ida kills Just and then his accomplice, who breaks in looking for the money. She returns to France, and Pierre.

# If Not Us, Who

Germany 2011

Director: Andres Veiel

The latest in an increasingly long line of films to turn an eye to the radical politics of 1960s Germany, documentarist Andres Veiel's debut feature will inevitably invite comparisons with Uli Edel's *The Baader Meinhof Complex*, separated as the two films are by only four years. And yet subject-matter apart, *If Not Us, Who* treads an altogether different path, one that takes us on a roundabout journey through the decade to a place that is far more melancholic than Edel's destination, avoiding *Bonnie and Clyde*-style mythologising to bring us instead a nuanced – perhaps too nuanced – portrait of a generation coming to terms with the sins of its fathers.

As the film opens, a series of black screens spares us the bloody sight of a large ginger tom cat tearing apart a nightingale chick, leaving us with only a flutter of wings to piece together the bird's inevitable destruction. When the action begins in earnest, it is in the aftermath of the cat's ensuing death at the hands of celebrated Nazi author Will Vesper, who admonishes his young son Bernward that "cats are the Jews of the animal kingdom." Some 15 years later, we meet the now adult Bernward, an idealistic young man determined to rescue his father's works from the critical wilderness in which they've languished since WWII. He takes up with a young redhead who introduces him to her sallow, humourless friend Gudrun Ensslin.

The hard-edged femme fatale of modern-day legend thus slips into Veiel's film as a supporting player: in thrall to the charming and strident Vesper, Ensslin takes a lowly teaching job to support his publishing endeavour, and is so distraught when he cheats on her that she maims her genitals with broken glass and slinks off into the snow to die. It is here that we have our first glimpse of the intemperance, fervour and fragility that characterised the Ensslins' "brightest and most difficult daughter".

The son of a Nazi, Bernward is traumatised by his struggle to reconcile filial affection with the values that his conscience and education tell him are right; Gudrun, however, seems to bear the weight of a nation's guilt on her shoulders. As played with ferocious intensity by Lena Lauzemis, she is a woman of frightening intelligence, terrified by what she perceives is happening around her; everything she does – her marriage to Bernward, affair with Andreas Baader, abandonment of her son and the horrific acts of terrorism – is the desperate scrabbling of a woman aware of her powerlessness against the relentless march of history.

Staged against a rather hokey background of archive footage and jingly-jangly 60s pop songs, Veiel's film at times risks alienating its audience with its overabundance of detail. But at the core of the film is an engaging





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Driving on the left: Lena Lauzemis, August Diehl

and hard-fought battle between words and actions, in which both Ensslin and Vesper's relationship and the future of Germany itself are at stake. Baader is no more than a bit-player (albeit an extremely charismatic one), Meinhof nowhere to be seen. Instead, the human consequences of history are wrought on these two poor individuals. The gulf

between Ensslin's enduring renown and the erasure of her former lover from film history perhaps stands as a retrospective judgement: in film, at least, actions speak louder than words. Which makes *If Not Us, Who* a very welcome addition to the canon of radical-political biographies.

◆◆ Catherine Wheatley

## CREDITS

**Producer**  
Thomas Kufus  
**Written by**  
Andres Veiel  
**Director of Photography**  
Judith Kaufmann  
**Editor**  
Hansjörg Weissbrich  
**Art Director**  
Christian M. Goldbeck  
**Music**  
Annette Focks  
**Sound**  
Paul Oberle  
**Costume Designer**  
Bettina Marx

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**Production Companies**

zero one film  
In co-production with  
SWR, Degeto, WDR,  
Deutschfilm, Senator  
Film Produktion  
With the assistance of  
Medienboard Berlin-  
Brandenburg, MFG  
Filmförderung Baden-  
Württemberg,  
Filmförderung  
Hamburg Schleswig-  
Holstein, Hessische  
Filmförderung, Der  
Beauftragte der  
Bundesregierung für  
Kultur und Medien,  
Filmförderungsanstalt,  
Deutscher  
Filmförderfonds  
A film by Andres Veiel

## CAST

**August Diehl**  
Bernward Vesper  
**Lena Lauzemis**  
Gudrun Ensslin  
**Alexander Fehling**  
Andreas Baader  
**Thomas Thieme**  
Will Vesper  
**Imogen Kogge**  
Rose Vesper  
**Michael Wittenborn**  
Helmut Ensslin  
**Susanne Lothar**  
Ilse Ensslin  
**Sebastian Blomberg**  
Klaus Roehler  
**Vickie Krieps**  
Dörte Wellheim  
**Martin Butzke**  
Dieter Kunzelmann

**Christina Hecke**  
Anne  
**Maria-Victoria Dragus**  
Ruth Ensslin, aged 13

**Dolby Digital**  
**In Colour**  
[2.35:1]  
**Subtitles**

**Distributor**  
Soda Pictures

German theatrical title  
**Wer wenn nicht wir**

# In Darkness

Germany/Poland/USA/  
Italy/Canada 2011

**Director:** Agnieszka Holland

**Certificate** 15 143m 43s

Andrzej Wajda's *Kanal* (1957) was post-war Polish cinema's first major masterpiece, a clammily claustrophobic World War II drama set mainly in the Warsaw sewers. With her latest film, Agnieszka Holland (Wajda's assistant in the 1970s) has made a similar descent, and although the Lwów sewers harbour fugitive Jews instead of Polish resistance fighters, the films have much in common. In fact, *In Darkness* turns out to be a stronger 'Wajda' film than anything Wajda himself has made recently, including the disappointingly low-key *Katyn* (2007).

Despite David Shammoo's initially English-language script and Holland's extensive Hollywood experience, she has refused to go down the linguistic route taken by *Schindler's List* (1993) or *The Pianist* (2002), insisting that the characters speak Polish, German, Hebrew, Ukrainian and associated dialects instead. This emphasises the film's most distinctive theme: that Eastern Europe's persecuted minorities often only had mutual Nazi hatred in common, and that even notionally homogeneous ethnic groups were sharply divided by nationality and class.

Sewer worker and petty thief Leopold Socha (a splendidly weaselly Robert Wieckiewicz, whose muscular lead performance anchors the film) only agrees to hide 'Yids' in 'his' tunnels in exchange for a daily rate exceeding the one-off reward that he'd get from the Gestapo for turning them in. He's fully aware of their likely fate, as he's already witnessed a group of naked women being rounded up in the forest prior to their offscreen (but clearly audible) execution.

Anyone familiar with Holland's previous WWII-era films *Angry Harvest* (1985) or *Europa Europa* (1990) will recognise her sardonically ambivalent approach here, and Socha is a worthy successor to Leon Wolny (Armin Mueller-Stahl) or Solomon Perel (Marco Hofschneider). Another inescapable



Wieckiewicz, Skonieczny

comparison is with his equally real-life contemporary Oskar Schindler, whose feat Socha paralleled by preserving a handful of Jews in sewers for the 14 months separating the Lwów ghetto's liquidation and the Red Army's arrival.

Holland, herself a descendant of victims of the Warsaw ghetto liquidation, is understandably disinclined to soft-pedal their ordeal. One of the fugitives, Mania Keller, is so revolted by the sewers that she prefers the more controlled horrors of a concentration camp instead, while the children devise games to facilitate imaginative escapes. Bringing Samuel Beckett's metaphor of the gravedigger's forceps to horribly vivid life, a baby is born underground, posing a hideous dilemma (noise echoes far and wide in the tunnels), and the baby is itself the product of an adulterous liaison that permanently ruptured one of the families just before the descent. Socha has an equally hard time keeping a lid (or manhole) on his secret: a slip-up by his daughter Stefcia in front of his Gestapo-collaborating Ukrainian friend Bortnik nearly causes disaster.

Where *In Darkness* falls down in comparison to *Kanal* is that it is

**SYNOPSIS** Lwów, Poland, the 1940s. When some ghettoised Jews tunnel under the city, sewer worker (and sometime petty thief) Leopold Socha and his colleague Szczepiek Wróblewski threaten to turn them in, but are persuaded to hide them for a regular fee. After the ghetto's liquidation, Socha agrees to hide some of the Jews permanently, including Mundek Margulies, Klara and Mania Keller, Yanek Grossmann and his mistress Chaja, the Chiger family, and others. Unable to bear the conditions, Mania leaves. Socha's former cellmate Bortnik, now a local commander, trawls the sewers for Jews, but Socha deliberately misdirects him. Szczepiek accidentally reveals their secret to Socha's wife Wanda, and Socha buys her silence. The sound of praying and children crying drives Yanek and two others to leave (they are later found dead). Mundek emerges above ground and kills a German soldier to evade capture. Szczepiek is among dozens of Poles killed in reprisal. Socha constantly shifts the Jews' location. Chaja gets stuck in a narrow tunnel, revealing her pregnancy. Mundek smuggles himself into Janowska concentration camp and finds Mania, who would rather stay there. Chaja gives birth, and smothers the crying baby, unaware that Wanda has arranged adoption. The Jews run out of money but Socha continues protecting them. A storm causes severe flooding. Appalled to find the sewers being mined, Socha takes Bortnik down to show him potentially explosive gas pipes, abandoning him there to drown. The Jews face a similar fate, until a burst drain reduces the water level. The Soviet army reaches Lwów and the Jews are rescued.



sometimes prey to the now familiar tropes of the 'Holocaust film'. A random killing occurs beside a concentration-camp orchestra playing a Strauss waltz, and Socha's conversion from cynical opportunist to morally upright saviour comes after a murder finally hits home (an exact equivalent of Schindler's encounter with the red-coated girl, albeit without the gimmicky colour effects). There's some equally clumsy symbolism in the devastating flood that interrupts Stefcia's communion, or the intrusive introduction of Purcell's 'Dido's Lament' at a point that's already emotionally overloaded. But these are countered by a gratifyingly dispassionate refusal to sanctify the film's often dislikeable 'victims' as they squabble, abuse, threaten and even copulate with one another (the film is strikingly earthy, above and below ground), while avoiding the attention of understandably inquisitive rats. Though the film's factual basis dictates an upbeat ending, much of the journey is appropriately and memorably grim.

➡ **Michael Brooke**

## CREDITS

**Produced by**  
Steffen Reuter  
Patrick Knippel  
Marc-Daniel Dichant  
Leander Carrell  
Juliusz Machulski  
Eric Jordan  
Paul Stephens  
**Written by**  
David F. Shamoan  
Based on the book *In The Sewers of Lvov* by Robert Marshall  
**Director of Photography**  
Jolanta Dylewska  
**Edited by**  
Michał Czarniecki  
**Production Designer**  
Erwin Prib  
**Music**  
Antoni Komasa-  
Lazarkiewicz  
**Sound Design**  
**Supervisor**  
Daniel Pellerin  
**Costume Designer**  
Katarzyna Lewinska  
Jagna Janicka

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Filmkollektiv GmbH,  
Studio Filmowe Zebra,  
Hidden Films Inc.  
**Production Companies**  
A Polish Film Institute  
co-financed production  
Produced with the  
financial participation of  
Mitteldeutsche,  
Medienboard Berlin-  
Brandenburg GmbH, FFA  
- Filmförderungsanstalt,  
Deutscher  
Filmförderfonds,  
HessenInvestFilm,  
Studio Babelsberg, Cine  
Postproduction,  
Cinegate Germany,  
Filmissimo, Theatre D  
Digital, Astral Harold  
Greenberg Fund, Rogers  
Telefund, Canadian  
Heritage, Ontario Media  
Development  
Corporation  
In association with  
Zuendel  
Communications  
GmbH  
**Executive Producers**  
Wojciech Danowski  
David F. Shamoan  
Dr Carl Woebken  
Christoph Fisser  
Anna Maria Zündel

## CAST

**Robert Wieckiewicz**  
Leopold Socha  
**Benno Fürmann**  
Mundek Margulies  
**Agnieszka Grochowska**  
Klara Keller  
**Maria Schrader**  
Paulina Chiger  
**Herbert Knaup**  
Ignacy Chiger  
**Marcin Bosak**  
Yanek Weiss  
**Julia Kijowska**  
Chaja  
**Jerzy Walczak**  
Jacob Berestycki  
**Oliwier Stanczak**  
Pawel Chiger  
**Milla Bankowicz**  
Krystyna Chiger  
**Krzysztof Skonieczny**  
Szczepiek  
**Kinga Preis**  
Wanda Socha  
**Michał Żurawski**  
Bortnik  
**Marcin Bosak**  
Yanek Weiss  
**Maria Semotiuk**  
Mania Keller

**Dolby Digital**  
**In Colour**  
[1.85:1]  
**Subtitles**

**Distributor**  
Metrodome Distribution

**12.934 ft + 8 frames**

German theatrical title  
**In Darkness Eine wahre Geschichte**

# Into the Abyss A Tale of Death, a Tale of Life

**USA/United Kingdom/  
Germany 2011**

**Director: Werner Herzog**  
**Certificate 12A 107m 12s**

*Into the Abyss A Tale of Death, a Tale of Life* is our Film of the Month and is reviewed on page 52

## CREDITS

**Produced by**  
Erik Nelson  
**Director of Photography**  
Peter Zeitlinger

**Picture and Music Editor**  
Joe Bini  
**Music Composed by**  
Mark degli Antoni  
**Production Sound**  
Eric Spitzer

Jeff Duncan  
Randy Foster  
Michael Lie  
Al McGuire  
Steve Osmon

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Productions, Inc., Skellig  
Rock Productions, Inc.

**Production Companies**  
Creative Differences and  
Skellig Rock in  
association with Spring  
Films and Werner  
Herzog Film present a  
film by Werner Herzog  
Produced in association  
with More 4 and Spring  
Films Ltd. and Werner  
Herzog Films GmbH  
Sundance Select, ID  
Films

**Executive Producers**  
Dave Harding  
Amy Briamonte  
for Discovery ID:  
Henry Schleiff  
Sara Kozak  
for Spring Films and  
Werner Herzog Film:

Andre Singer  
Lucki Stipetic

**In Colour**  
[1.85:1]

**Distributor**  
Revolver Entertainment

**9,648 ft +0 frames**



**Relative truth: Charles Richardson**

**SYNOPSIS** In a prologue and six chapters, Werner Herzog explores the consequences of a triple homicide which occurred in Conroe, Texas, in 2001. Prologue. Herzog interviews the Reverend Richard Lopez, who attends state executions, and Michael James Perry, one of the two convicted murderers, who faces execution eight days later.

I: The Crime. Lieutenant Damon Hall of the Conroe Police shows Herzog the videos taken at the crime scenes in 2001 and talks him through what happened. Perry and his friend Jason Aaron Burkett shot Sandra Stotler in her home in the gated community of Highland Ranch in order to steal her car, and then tricked and shot Sandra's adopted son Adam Stotler and his friend Jeremy Richardson for the electronic device which opened the community's gates. Herzog interviews bereaved relatives Lisa Stotler-Balloun and Charles Richardson, and the other convicted killer Burkett, who is serving a 40-year sentence. Both convicted men now deny murder, although Perry confessed in 2001 and gave evidence which led the police to the corpses.

II: The Dark Side of Conroe. Herzog interviews handyman Jared Talbert and former barmaid Amanda West on their bad memories of Perry and Burkett.

III: The Emptiness. Herzog interviews Delbert Burkett, father of Jason, who is also serving a 40-year jail term; his testimony about Jason's sickly and deprived childhood saved the boy from a death sentence. Lisa Stotler-Balloun speaks about losing all her close relatives in a period of six months.

IV: A Glimmer of Hope. Herzog interviews Mellyssa Burkett, who has married Jason in jail and is now expecting his child by artificial insemination. Michael Perry speaks about facing imminent execution with equanimity.

V: The Protocol of Death. Herzog interviews Fred Allen, former captain of the Death House team in Huntsville Prison, who describes the execution procedure and explains why he quit the job (at the cost of his pension) after supervising 125 executions. Lisa Stotler-Balloun speaks about attending Michael Perry's execution.

VI: The Urgency of Life. Mellyssa Burkett speaks about 'Death Row groupies' and her reasons for wanting Jason's child. Fred Allen speaks about making things right for himself and his family after leaving the prison service ... and about watching hummingbirds.

# Intruders

**Spain/USA 2011**

**Director: Juan Carlos Fresnadillo**  
**Certificate 15 99m 59s**

Contemporary Spanish filmmakers – Jaime Balagueró, Alejandro Amenábar – seem to associate the British Isles (including the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man) with the ghostly. Juan Carlos Fresnadillo, who made the unusual psychic drama *Intacto* (2001) in Spain and the effective sequel *28 Weeks Later* (2007) in the UK, literally straddles Spain and Britain for this low-key horror drama.

At first, *Intruders* seems to be telling a parallel story, implying that children in Madrid and London are being simultaneously pestered by the same bogeyman – delaying for some time the reveal that the subtitled Spanish scenes take place decades before the British-set, English-language sections of the film. In retrospect, it's obvious that fragile Spanish Juan will grow up to be bluff British John, but there's still a frisson when Clive Owen responds to his shadowy mother Luisa in fluent Spanish. It's a tricky bit of misdirection, but it also defuses the film as suspense-horror, cutting back and forth so often that the two imperilled children and their troubled parents are never quite as trapped by the plot as they ought to be for proper involvement in their plights.

The film makes heavy weather of the traditional theme of unhappiness passed down through the family. Like Bernard Rose's *Paperhouse* (the memory of an angry, unreasonable father is transmuted in a child's imagination into a bogeyman with the power to inflict real-world harm), *Intruders* tries to have it both ways, with a proper horror-movie monster for the poster but a reductive psychological explanation of his origins. Too early in the film for it to resonate properly, we see the CGI-augmented hooded figure of 'Hollowface' as a real, physical presence (evoking such sub-Freddy franchise wannabe creeps as the menaces in *Boogeyman* and *Darkness Falls*) trying to snatch the child. But this primal scene is later replayed as it really happened – a literal tug-of-love between estranged parents, ending with the semi-accidental death of the father (played, of course, by Owen as a lookalike for the grown-up John) and his corpse's convenient disappearance into the wet concrete of a building foundation.

There are a number of effectively creepy touches: the traditionally disorienting image of a smooth mask of skin replacing a face, a hooded church statue that seems to represent the monster even when Luisa seeks sanctuary in a sacred place. But *Intruders* also has a euro-pudding feel that hinders its effectiveness, and is a touch too solemn and a touch too mild to be truly frightening or particularly enthralling.

Ella Purnell is impressive as the persecuted yet brave junior heroine, though Carice van Houten and Kerry Fox are both stuck with thankless roles, the sceptical mother (who has one





Invasion of the face snatcher: Carice Van Houten, Ella Purnell, Clive Owen

# The Island President

USA/Germany 2011

Director: Jon Shenk

In 2008, a former activist with a blinding smile, sticky-out ears and a cigarette habit was elected president on a rising tide of hope, promising a social and political sea change after years of corruption, oppression and denial. His name: Mohamed Nasheed, first democratically elected president of the Maldives. From the outset, two shadows hang over this intelligent and affecting documentary, which charts Nasheed's initial 12 months in power. The first – given that the low-lying Maldives are threatened by rising sea levels – is the international community's continuing failure to reach a binding agreement on climate change. The second is the military coup against Nasheed on 7 February this year, which postdates the completion of the documentary but makes its release, and careful viewing, all the more urgent. There's evidence that the coup was organised by supporters of Nasheed's predecessor, the dictator Maumoon Abdul Gayoom; it's clear from the documentary that, once in power, Nasheed threatened the entrenched interests that he'd been imprisoned and tortured for criticising when he was a young journalist.

In the three years since the Copenhagen summit, climate change has been pushed off the front pages and the international agenda by the economic crisis; Nasheed and his literal struggle to keep his island nation above water have likewise disappeared from the news. The film is compelling, then, because of its pressing subject-matter, but it is also entrancing, its use of classical observational techniques combining with dense and informative news footage to produce a complex portrait of its dual subject, Nasheed and the islands he governed. Every shot of palm-fringed Indian Ocean beauty is balanced by shots of tidal waves, eroded rocks, sea walls: as viewers, we are asked to think critically about the damage wrought by our indulgence in the stereotype that Nasheed calls "Paradise meets Paradise".

Nasheed, a brilliant negotiator and impassioned speaker whom then Danish prime minister Lars Rasmussen credited with salvaging an agreement from the 2009 Copenhagen Conference, is not only the leader of a group of islands but also, as this documentary shows, an island in himself, a unique political figure whose uniqueness isolates him in contemporary international politics. The documentary, which had intimate access to Nasheed and his cabinet over the 18 months between his election and Copenhagen, shows the kind of president many dreamed that other sticky-out-eared smoker might become: outspoken, with a tendency to go off-script, and inventive and immediate (putting colleagues and journalists in scuba gear for the first ever underwater cabinet meeting;



Rising tide: Mohamed Nasheed

driving a point home by telling a New York radio presenter who portrays climate change as a developing-world issue that Manhattan is on the same elevation – just one metre above sea level – as Malé).

Nasheed is also (like Obama) a dealmaker and pragmatist, disappointing his idealistic cabinet colleagues by working for the non-binding agreement in Copenhagen. At the end of the film, he speaks directly to the camera, saying simply: "We just can't disappear. We just can't." A few minutes later, Thom Yorke intones, "I'm not here/This isn't happening," over the end credits. It's a moving moment, made all the more cruel and plaintive by recent events. This documentary, which stands against disappearance, demands to be seen. **◆◆ Sophie Mayer**

## CREDITS

**Produced by**  
Richard Berge  
Bonni Cohen  
**Director of Photography**  
Jon Shenk  
**Edited by**  
Pedro Kos  
**Sound Recorder**  
Lincoln Else

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**Production Companies**  
AfterImage Public Media, ITVS and Actual Films in association with Impact Partners present  
A co-production of AfterImage Public Media and the Independent Television Service

(ITVS), with funding provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting  
Produced by AfterImage Public Media  
Made possible with support from Ford Foundation, The John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, The Atlantic Philanthropies, Spencer Adler, Sundance Institute Documentary Fund, PUMA Creative Mobility Award, Brian L. Ferrall, Laurie K. Poston, The Wallace Global Fund  
**Executive Producer**  
Jon Elise

**Distributor**  
Dogwoof

**SYNOPSIS** The Maldives, 2008. Mohamed Nasheed, a former political prisoner returned from exile in the UK, becomes the country's first democratically elected president after the 30-year dictatorship of Maumoon Abdul Gayoom. Along with social and economic problems, Nasheed faces the threat of rising oceans caused by climate change: the Maldives lie only a metre or so above sea level, and are already subject to erosion (exacerbated by luxury tourism) and changing monsoon patterns. The film follows Nasheed's first year in office, culminating in the 2009 Copenhagen Climate Conference, where he attempts to broker an international deal to save his country.

striking moment, caught naked and smoking by her disapproving daughter) and the psychologist whose diagnosis of *folie à deux* is a plot inconvenience (but essentially right).

◆◆ Kim Newman

## CREDITS

**Produced by**  
Enrique López-Lavigne  
Belén Atienza  
Mercedes Gamero  
**Written by**  
Nicolás Casariego  
Jaime Marques  
Based on an original idea by Juan Carlos Fresno, Enrique López-Lavigne, Belén Atienza  
**Director of Photography**  
Enrique Chediak  
**Editor**  
Nacho Ruiz Capillas  
**Production Designer**  
Alain Bainée  
**Music Composed & Conducted by**

Roque Baños  
**Sound**  
Aitor Berenguer  
James Muñoz  
**Costume Designer**  
Tatiana Hernández  
©Apaches  
Entertainment & Antena 3 Films  
**Production Companies**  
A Universal Pictures International presentation  
An Apaches Entertainment & Antena 3 Films production  
With the collaboration of Canal+  
With the participation of Antena 3

With the support of Gobierno de España, Ministerio de Cultura, ICAA  
**Executive Producers**  
Jesús de La Vega  
Ricardo García Arrojo

## CAST

**Clive Owen**  
John Farrow  
**Carice van Houten**  
Susanna Farrow, 'Sue'  
**Daniel Brühl**  
Father Antonio  
**Pilar López de Ayala**  
Luisa  
**Ella Purnell**  
Mia  
**Izán Corchero**  
Juan  
**Kerry Fox**  
Doctor Rachel  
**Héctor Alterio**  
old priest  
**Adrian Rawlins**  
police inspector  
**Michael Nardone**  
Frank  
**Mark Wingett**  
Dave

**Peter McNeil O'Connor**  
David Waretton

**Dolby Digital**  
**In Colour**  
[2.35:1]

**Distributor**  
Universal Pictures  
International UK & Eire

8,998 ft +8 frames

**SYNOPSIS** Madrid. Juan, an imaginative eight-year-old living with his mother Luisa, claims that Hollowface, a hooded bogeyman from his dreams, has invaded his bedroom by night and tried to take his face away. Juan becomes obsessively terrified of Hollowface and afraid to sleep. Luisa, who also begins to see the bogeyman, seeks help from young priest Antonio, though she is unable to complete her confession and a senior priest refuses to consider exorcism.

In England, 12-year-old Mia, daughter of construction engineer John Farrow and his wife Susanna, discovers a story about Hollowface concealed in a tree in her grandparents' garden and passes it off as her own at school. The bogeyman appears in Mia's London bedroom; John intervenes, driving the intruder away. However, Mia is unable to speak, and afraid that the creature wants to take her face for his own. Worried, John has a hi-tech security system installed, but Hollowface returns and John struggles with him again. When it turns out that Hollowface doesn't register on cameras, Mia's therapist and the police insist that John leave the house, to break father and daughter's shared delusion.

Consulting his mother Luisa, John remembers that as a boy in Spain he saw his own abusive father – the original Hollowface – fall to his death. Having willed the ghostly version into existence, John suppressed it by concealing the story he wrote about it in the tree. Understanding the source of the family ghost, John helps Mia dispel Hollowface, and the girl speaks again.



## Artificial Eye

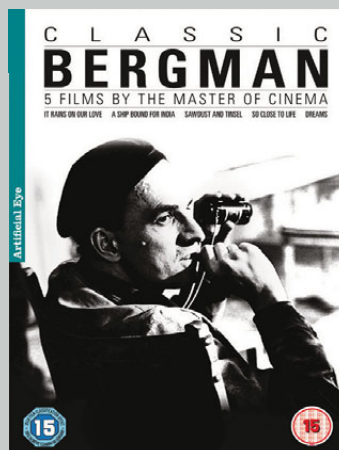
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● Released on DVD and Blu-Ray 2 April



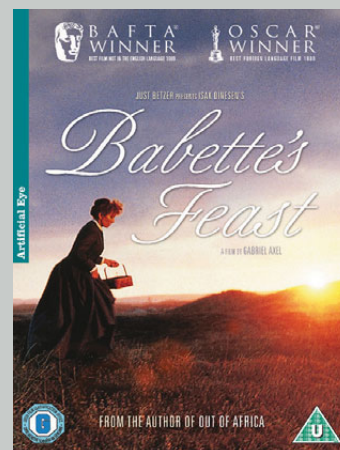
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*Sawdust and Tinsel*  
*So Close to Life*  
*Dreams*

● Released on DVD and Blu-ray 23 April

**5  
DISC  
SET**



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The long awaited re-release of this Oscar and Bafta winning classic from 1987, based on the story by Karen Blixen.

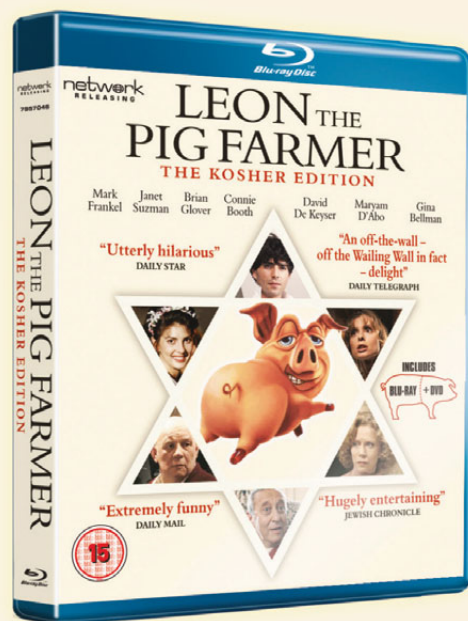
● Released on DVD and Blu-Ray 28 May

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# Journey 2 The Mysterious Island

USA 2012

Director: Brad Peyton

Certificate PG 94m 2s

Michael Caine has made a habit of punctuating his glittering career with irredeemable rubbish ever since he starred in 1978's *The Swarm* opposite a bunch of killer bees. We can only guess at what kind of bet he'd lost when he had to sign up for this particular encounter with improbable insects, but at least he's got the better of those bees – this time they're the size of ponies, and he's riding one. We're not objecting. This is 3D half-term fodder and if dear old Michael Caine wants to ride a bee, why shouldn't he? He's got the best part in the film anyway, since he only appears in the fun bits, gets to dress like Indiana Jones and saves the day on several occasions.

The story is loosely inspired by Jules Verne's 1874 fantasy novel and involves a young man's quest to find his missing grandfather on a mysterious South Seas island, and then escape from same island before it sinks into the ocean. While the grown-ups clown around, it's up to Josh Hutcherson as teen explorer Sean to try to look like he's taking the whole thing seriously, but it's a challenge. As Sean's stepfather Hank, Dwayne 'the Rock' Johnson may start the film as the token responsible adult but it's not long before he's whipping out his ukulele for a spot of cockle-warming campfire crooning, or popping berries off his overdeveloped pectorals in an attempt to show Sean how to attract girls. The girl in question, Kailani, is played by Vanessa Hudgens as straight eye-candy in short-shorts and a skimpy T-shirt; the dads accompanying their sons to the cinema (and it will be mainly dads and sons) are thus presumably catered for.

Men and manliness are very much the theme of the piece: is Sean man enough to go on this dangerous journey? Is Hank man enough to impress Sean's grandfather Alexander (Caine)? Is Alexander man enough to forgive Hank for being a jerk? Is Kailani's useless and venal father Gabato man enough to pilot a



Sequelle surprise: Guzmán, Hudgens, Hutcherson, Caine, Johnson

steampunk submarine left behind by Captain Nemo? There's not much nuance in this blueprint of masculinity, not that you'd expect there to be – though there is a rather striking frisson of unintentional (surely?) homoeroticism in Gabato's puppy-dog hero-worship of big, strong Hank.

All that story stuff is just sentimental scaffolding anyway: the 3D special effects are the main event, and if there are any under-16s left who can muster an ooh or an aah when something flies at them out of the screen, they will be happy enough with what director Brad Peyton dishes up: the swooping panoramas filled with lollipop plants and mega-fauna; the underwater

jumpstart-a-submarine-off-an-electric-eel sequence; the aforementioned Great Bee Chase. The film's precursor is not so much the out-of-this-world wonder of *Avatar* as the holiday-gone-wrong paradigm of *Jurassic Park*, and in fact its plot strongly resembles 2001's strictly workmanlike *Jurassic Park III*, although it never takes itself as seriously as anything in the dollar-magnet dino-franchise. Still, as the sequel of an adaptation itself, it happily takes its cues from any number of sequel-of-a-sequel-of-an-adaptation adventures. The ending seems to promise that the franchise will run on – Verne, we note, wrote 54 adventure novels.

•• Lisa Mullen

## CREDITS

**Produced by**  
Beau Flynn  
Tripp Vinson  
Charlotte Huggins  
**Screenplay**  
Brian Gunn  
Mark Gunn  
**Story**  
Richard Outten  
Brian Gunn  
Mark Gunn  
**Director of Photography**  
David Tattersall  
**Edited by**  
David Rennie

**Production Designer**  
Bill Boes  
**Music**  
Andrew Lockington  
**Sound Designer**  
Al Nelson  
**Costumes Designed by**  
Denise Wingate  
**Visual Effects**  
Rising Sun Pictures  
Scanline VFX  
Pixomondo Visual Effects  
MPC  
Method Studios  
Vancouver

Trixer Film GmbH  
Ico VFX, LLC  
**Stunt Co-ordinator**  
Alex Daniels  
  
©New Line Productions, Inc.  
**Production Companies**  
New Line Cinema  
presents a Contrailfilm production  
**Executive Producers**  
Richard Brenner  
Michael Disco  
Samuel J. Brown  
Marcus Viscidi  
Michael Bostick  
Evan Turner

**Some screenings presented in 3D**

**Distributor**  
Warner Bros  
Distributors (UK)

**8,463 ft +0 frames**

**IMAX prints**  
99m 22s  
143,092

## CAST

Dwayne Johnson  
Hank  
Michael Caine  
Alexander  
Josh Hutcherson  
Sean Anderson  
Luis Guzmán  
Gabato  
Vanessa Hudgens  
Kailani  
Kristin Davis  
Liz  
Anna Colwell  
Jessica

Dolby Digital/  
Datasat/SDDS  
In Colour  
Prints by  
DeLuxe  
[L85:1]

# The Kid with a Bike

Belgium/France/Italy 2011

Directors: Jean-Pierre Dardenne, Luc Dardenne

Certificate 12A 87m 16s

The familiar and not-so-familiar rub shoulders in the Dardenne brothers' latest, *The Kid with a Bike*, not always frictionlessly. Alongside customary markers – non-professional actors, documentary naturalism, small-town setting – there are several firsts in the brothers' oeuvre: a major star (Cécile de France), music (Beethoven, sparingly used), a relatively happy ending, and a summer shoot that, for all the film's grimmer moments, gives it a lighter feel than usual. *The Kid with a Bike* is also a self-professed fairytale, another first, with the bolder lines and simpler story arc that implies: the tale of a boy in care, Cyril, rejected by his father but taken under the wing of a fairy godmother in the shape of benevolent local hairdresser Samantha. It's an altogether more commercial proposition than hitherto, prompting us to wonder why have the brothers made this move.

Cyril, incarnated perfectly by Thomas Doret, is close kin to Emilie Dequenne's Rosetta, a dogged scrapper nicknamed Pitbull by local gang leader Wes, a tightly wound bundle of ferocious self-propulsion ruled by his confusion and anger. Cyril's turmoil is conveyed most effectively on the soundtrack, by his racked breathing as he runs, fights, rides his beloved bike. The thrust of the narrative will centre in essence on his learning to control his breathing and harmonise it with a different rhythm, as in the symbolically key scene where Samantha and Cyril eventually ride their bikes together, and even swap them at one point.

There are interesting patterns in the script to ponder. Cyril's father's crisis seems to have been provoked by the death of his own mother, and he too seems to have been put back on the right path by the love of a woman, who is also his employer – note that (fearful?) glance towards her when Cyril visits him at his restaurant workplace, a nice detail. There's another rejection too when self-sacrificing Samantha ditches her current boyfriend, precipitated by his clash with Cyril (the least effective scene in the film, it actually drew laughs at the screening I attended). Women are by far the most upright, most decisive, most responsible characters in the film (a judge, later, is also a woman, presiding over a benign, sensible decision). In fact, *The Kid with a Bike* compares intriguingly with its fellow Cannes prizewinner *The Tree of Life* by virtue of its investment in an idealised maternal figure, a less ecstatic, exalted version admittedly, but one equally imbued with a serenely accommodating grace, a selfless purity, to the point of seeming slightly unreal – an impression reinforced by the brothers' casting of a famous and beautiful star in this ordinary setting.

But that investment comes at a cost,

**SYNOPSIS** US, present day. Seventeen-year-old Sean Anderson has already been on a journey to the centre of the Earth following in the footsteps of his missing father; now he's receiving a coded radio message from his missing grandfather Alexander, who is somewhere in the South Pacific. The three generations of Andersons are 'Vernians' – they believe Jules Verne's adventure books to be fact.

Reluctantly accepting the help of his sceptical stepfather Hank, Sean travels to the South Pacific and hires helicopter pilot Gabato and his beautiful teenage daughter Kailani to travel to a mysterious island that supposedly doesn't exist. Their helicopter crashes in a storm but they all survive. They are nearly killed by a giant lizard, but are rescued by Alexander, who explains that on the island large creatures are small and small creatures are giant-sized; he also tells them that the island's ruined city is the real Atlantis, its volcano made of gold.

The island is sinking back into the sea, and the group's only hope of escape is to find an ancient submarine left behind by Captain Nemo. Using their knowledge of Verne's stories, they negotiate various dangers and reach the submarine just in time. Sean returns home with Kailani at his side; Alexander goes his own way but returns on Sean's birthday with an invitation to travel to the moon.





Uneasy rider: Cécile de France, Thomas Doret

at least here, where the male characters apart from Cyril seem two-dimensional. The film isn't completely black and white, and some cursory attempt is made to give shading to Wes, for example, who's seen helping his disabled gran; and the shop owner Cyril knocks out accepts his apology. But by and large men in the film don't acquit themselves well, are somehow 'fallen', selfish; that same shop owner urges his son to evade responsibility for a potential manslaughter. This is the trap Cyril must learn to recognise and avoid, ending up like one of them. And on this evidence women are better equipped to raise and nurture boys, preferably alone; men can be just a negative and unwelcome influence.

## CREDITS

### Producers

Jean-Pierre Dardenne  
Luc Dardenne  
Denis Freyd

### Written by

Jean-Pierre Dardenne  
Luc Dardenne

### Director of

Photography

Alain Marceon

### Editor

Marie-Hélène Dozo

### Art Direction

Igor Gabriel

### Sound Recordist

Jean-Pierre Duret

### Costume Designer

Maira Ramedhan-Levi

©Les Films du Fleuve,  
Archipel 35, Lucky Red,  
RTBF - Télévision belge  
France 2 Cinéma  
Production  
Companies  
Les Films du Fleuve,  
Archipel 35, Lucky Red

present in co-production with France 2 Cinéma, RTBF - Télévision belge, Belgacom  
Produced with the support of Centre du Cinéma et de l'Audiovisuel de la Communauté française de Belgique et de VOO  
With the participation of Centre National du Cinéma et de l'Image Animée et Eurimages, Canal+, CinéCinéma, France Télévisions  
With the support of Région Wallonne, Tax Shelter du Gouvernement fédéral belge, Taxshelter.be, Inver Invest, Casa Kafka Pictures (Dexia, Making of), Sofica Soficinéma 7 and MEDIA programme of the European Union  
In association with Wild Bunch

All well and good, and certainly a fairytale with a difference, a feminist tinge, but still a fairytale; which is to say reductive, too tidy, with the cards stacked too much in favour of certain characters. The brothers' oft-stated and overriding attachment to the real seems slightly in abeyance here; there's a blunting of their customary subtlety and complexity. You probably couldn't accuse them of anything so crass as a message or the imparting of a lesson (although there's sometimes been a muted, subterranean tendency to didacticism in their work); more the advancement of a thesis, for which the fairytale vehicle provides a handy alibi. You may find yourself choosing to resist its spell. ♦♦ Kieron Corless

A co-production of Les Films du Fleuve, Archipel 35, Lucky Red, France 2 Cinéma, RTBF - Télévision belge, Belgacom  
Executive Producer  
Delphine Tomson

## CAST

Thomas Doret  
Cyril  
Cécile de France  
Samantha  
Jérémie Renier  
Guy Catoul  
Fabrizio Rongione  
bookseller  
Egon Di Mateo  
Wes  
Olivier Gourmet  
bistro owner

Dolby Digital  
In Colour  
[1.85:1]  
Subtitles

Distributor  
Artificial Eye Film Company  
7854 ft +0 frames  
Belgian/French theatrical title  
Le Gamin au vélo

# A Man's Story

United Kingdom 2010  
Director: Varon Bonicos  
Certificate 15 97m 51s

Director Varon Bonicos considers his study of menswear designer Oswald Boateng to be not so much a fashion documentary as an intimate portrait of a man's journey through life, bringing to mind D.H. Lawrence's maxim: "Never trust the artist, trust the tale."

One doesn't have to worship at the altar of Freudian psychoanalysis to be puzzled by the way Bonicos glosses over his subject's childhood. The son of Ghanaian immigrants to Britain, Boateng saw his parents – a teacher and a seamstress – divorce when he was eight. But there's little sense here of what it was like to grow up as a black Briton during the 1970s and 1980s (save for the obligatory news clip of the Brixton riots), and Boateng's relatives barely feature among the various glowing testimonies. (For all its flaws, at least the recent Vidal Sassoon documentary had its subject revisiting the Jewish orphanage he was sent to in the 1930s, and recalling his time fighting Oswald Mosley's fascists.)

Distilled from 420 hours of footage, *A Man's Story* represents a litany of missed opportunities, in which Bonicos's inability to ask penetrating questions is badly exposed. Given Britain's history of imperial exploitation, did Boateng experience no reservations about collecting an OBE at Buckingham Palace? What does it feel like to be a black, heterosexual designer in an industry dominated by white, homosexual men? Was he surprised to see dictators such as Colonel Gaddafi and Robert Mugabe rubbing shoulders at his African fashion show in Ghana?

Bonicos establishes an ongoing tension between his rough visual style – grainy, handheld digital video images and muffled sound – and the elegance and flamboyant colours of Boateng's creations. No wonder Boateng feels so at home in Hollywood, dressing the likes of Will Smith, Laurence Fishburne and Jamie Foxx. Dancing down the catwalks of his shows, the always immaculately dressed Boateng is a physically imposing man who oozes self-confidence, seemingly the embodiment of the all-conquering American Dream. Too often *A Man's Story* becomes an advert for luxury living: see our jet-setting hero jump out of a helicopter on the way to his next business triumph, or direct hundreds of Chinese extras on a film shoot, or rustle up Kofi Annan on the phone. The more we hear him describing himself as a "maverick creative" who doesn't so much design clothes as "make the man", the more the film recalls *Zoolander* (2001) or *Prêt-à-Porter* (1994).

Yes, we witness the pain of Boateng's break-up with his second wife, the Russian model Gyunel (in fact, the film begins with a bitter argument between them, in which she exhorts him to "be a man"). Throughout the professional



Tinkering tailor: Oswald Boateng

and personal highs and the lows, however, we never see what one French newspaper calls "le killer de la coupe" actually cutting any cloth in a workshop. You'd learn more about the craft of the tailor watching the couture counterfeiter (played by Salvatore Cantalupo) in Matteo Garrone's *Gomorrah*.

♦♦ Thomas Dawson

## CREDITS

Produced by  
Rachel Robey  
Alastair Clark

### Camera

Varon Bonicos

### Editor

Tom Hemmings

### Original Music

Chad Hobson

### Sound

Varon Bonicos

©A Man's Story Films  
Ltd/UK Film Council/  
Almea Projects Ltd

### Production

Companies

UK Film Council &  
Almea Projects

present a b.b.f. &  
Wellington Films

production in  
association with

Molinaré

b.b.f./Wellington Films

Production for UK Film

Council, Almea

Projects and Molinaré

Made with the support

of the UK Film Council's

New Cinema Fund and

UK Film Council's

Development Fund

### Executive Producers

Angus Aynsley

Miel de Botton Aynsley

### Film Extracts

Gangster No.1 (2000)

Bad Boys II (2003)

Daniel Day-Lewis  
Laurence Fishburne  
Jamie Foxx  
Herbie Hancock  
Jesse Jackson  
Spike Lee  
Brian McKnight  
Charles, Prince of Wales  
Wolfgang Puck  
Keanu Reeves  
Gavin Rossdale  
Ryan Seacrest  
Will Smith  
Isaiah Washington  
Forest Whitaker  
Ray Winstone  
Andrew Young  
Billy Zane  
Chris Tucker  
Michael Essien  
Mos Def  
Jamie Foxx  
Isaiah Washington

Dolby Digital  
In Colour  
[1.85:1]

Distributor  
Trinity Filmed  
Entertainment

8,806 ft +8 frames

## WITH

Oswald Boateng  
Giorgio Armani  
Michael Bay  
Paul Bettany  
Richard Branson  
Gabriel Byrne  
Don Cheadle

**SYNOPSIS** A documentary charting the life and career of British fashion designer Oswald Boateng between 1998 and 2010.

Boateng has his entire collection stolen from his Savile Row offices, is recruited by the French fashion giant Givenchy, fronts an American reality show *House of Boateng* and is awarded an OBE for services to the clothing industry. He also organises a fashion show during the 2007 African Union Summit held in Ghana, the country where his parents were born. Boateng meets his second wife, Russian model Gyunel, with whom he has two children. The film concludes with Boateng (now separated from Gyunel) closing London Fashion Week in 2010 with its biggest ever menswear show.

**SYNOPSIS** Belgium, the present. Cyril, a young boy in care, can't accept that he no longer has contact with his father. Cyril escapes but finds their old flat empty. During pursuit by his carers, Cyril grabs hold of Samantha, a local hairdresser. Later she brings him his missing bike, bought off a local man, which Cyril refuses to believe his father sold (though it later turns out that he did). Cyril asks Samantha if he can stay with her at weekends; she consents. Samantha locates Cyril's father, who agrees to see him. He is non-committal and distant, and ultimately tells a distraught Cyril not to contact him again. Cyril befriends Wes, a local gang leader. Wes coaches Cyril to attack a shop owner to steal his takings. The shop owner's son arrives unexpectedly and Cyril knocks him out too, but not before the son sees Cyril's face. An angry Wes threatens to kill Cyril if he says he was involved. Cyril goes to his father and offers him the stolen money, but is sent packing. Cyril returns to Samantha's and asks if he can live with her full-time; she accepts, and pays the damages for his crime. Wes, however, is sent to jail. Some time later, the shop owner's son chases Cyril, who escapes up a tree. The son hits him with a stone and Cyril falls to the ground, lying motionless. The shop owner throws the stone away and tells his son to say that Cyril simply fell. Cyril suddenly regains consciousness and rides off on his bike.



# North Sea Texas

Belgium 2011

Director: Bavo Defurne

Certificate 15 98m 13s

Belgian commentators have noted the rarity in their national cinema of films dealing with adolescent or school-age gay (or lesbian or transsexual) relationships – it must be said that such films hardly clog up the production schedules of any national cinema – so first-time director Bavo Defurne must be congratulated for tackling this delicate and worthwhile subject. Furthermore, he's had the bravery to set his film in a working-class milieu in a nondescript area at a time – the 1960s – when young gays would no doubt have been more emotionally and culturally isolated than they are today.

However, Defurne's young hero Pim (based on the protagonist of André Sollie's 2005 novella *This Will Never Go Away*) is by no means some clichéd, closeted victim: played with a quiet grace by Ben Van den Heuvel and Jelle Florizoone (as the ten-year-old and 16-year-old Pim respectively), he may be somewhat shy and self-contained but he exhibits at times a boldness, a desire for self-assertion and an emotional maturity that allow for no special pleading on the director's part. At all times Pim's plight – he suffers all the confusion, emotional vulnerability and buried anger that can afflict any adolescent – is entirely credible and often moving. That's not to say, however, that Defurne's film is an unalloyed success.

Defurne has established a reputation in festival and L&G film circles as a prolific director of shorts celebrating the male form, and he is known for his dismissive attitude towards social realism, advocating rather a type of stylisation that allows for greater "poetry and irony". But while there are a number of striking (Red One digitally shot) widescreen images provided by cinematographer Anton Mertens – notably of waving Ozu-like reeds in cutaway as Pim trysts with his handsome neighbour – the film is

mostly shot with a conventionality that would satisfy the least stylised of social-realist directors. The stylisation, in fact, seems to consist merely in the use of a saturated colour palette.

Likewise, through either feature-length directorial inexperience or some form of self-denying ordinance (perhaps a desire to reflect the narrowed vision of his young hero), all sense of the wider, lived-in community the boy inhabits is almost entirely absent. It's a very contained, if not coy, film, not helped by the director's habit of always cutting his scenes *just* a moment too soon – perhaps to save the modesty, or not expose the acting limitations, of his young actors. Worse is the barely hidden contempt Defurne shows for many of the (mainly adult) characters, especially Pim's mother Yvette and her grease-butt-eating boyfriends. For all its good intentions, it all makes for an emotionally jerky, aesthetically disappointing experience.

♦♦ Wally Hammond

## CREDITS

**Produced by**  
Yves Verbracken  
**Screenplay**  
Bavo Defurne  
Yves Verbracken  
Based upon the novel  
*Nooit gaat dit overby*  
André Sollie  
**Director of Photography**  
Anton Mertens  
**Editor**  
Els Voorspoels  
**Production Designer**  
Kurt Rigolle  
**Original Music**  
Adriano Cominotto  
**Sound**  
Johan Somers  
**Costume Design**  
Nathalie Lermytte

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**Production Companies**  
Indeed Films presents  
with the support of the  
Flanders Audiovisual  
Fund in co-production  
with Mollywood & EEN  
A film by Bavo Defurne  
In association with Fobis  
Films  
With the support of our  
Belgian Tex Shelter  
partners, Ottaer N.V.,  
Van Roey Automation  
With the support of  
Flanders Image,  
Vlaamse Film

Produced by Indeed  
Films  
**Executive Producer**  
Mariano Vanhoof

## CAST

**Eva Van der Gucht**  
Yvette  
**Katelijne Damen**  
Marcella  
**Luk Wyns**  
Etienne  
**Jelle Florizoone**  
Pim  
**Thomas Coumans**  
Zoltan  
**Nina Marie Kortekaas**  
Sabrina  
**Mathias Vergels**  
Gino  
**Ben Van den Heuvel**  
young Pim  
**Nathan Naenen**  
young Gino  
**Noor Ben Taouet**  
young Sabrina  
**Patricia Goemaere**  
Simone

**Dolby Digital**  
**In Colour**  
[2.35:1]  
**Subtitles**

**Distributor**  
Peccadillo Pictures Ltd

**8,839 ft +8 frames**

Dutch theatrical title  
**Noordzee, Texas**



Crime seen: Firat Tanis

# Once upon a Time in Anatolia

Turkey/Bosnia and Herzegovina 2011

Director: Nuri Bilge Ceylan

Certificate 15 157m 32s

Having already spent hours on the cold, dark mountain as part of a team carrying out what seems to be an endless, often farcical search for the burial spot of a murdered man conducted by the murderer himself, the melancholic, city-trained doctor Cemal (Muhammet Uzuner) is startled by the sudden revelation of a rock sculpture of an unknown face, illuminated by a flash of lightning. In the context of the leisurely, naturalistic flow of the scenes preceding, it's a creepy moment, suggesting supernatural horror, but not as gently unsettling as what's said by police driver Arap Ali soon afterwards: "There's good people and bad. You can never tell... That's what it's like around here, doctor. You're kind of forced to take matters into your own hands." Director Nuri Bilge Ceylan makes the plain meaning of Arap Ali's words mysterious by disembodiment them, taking the camera away from the

talking driver to behind his darkened back and then cutting to an unmatched shot of the silent, crying Arap Ali from another angle entirely.

It doesn't seem to add up. At least, not a first. It feels as if Ceylan is pulling the rug from under the viewers here – especially those used to the orthodox (if elliptical) minimalist naturalism of his earlier movies (the country diptych *The Small Town and Clouds of May*; the Istanbul-set *Distant* and *Climates*; the more genre-friendly *Three Monkeys*). What territory is Ceylan moving into now? In his earliest pair of films critics had him down as occupying Bresson land or following in the footsteps of Kiarostami; by the time of *Climates* it was Cassavetes who was the influence; now he seems to be annexing tropes associated with Kieslowski, and even, given his insistence on hidden and highly questionable (and almost exclusively male) motives, the uncomfortably probing social critiques of Michael Haneke. Whatever the influences – great filmmakers, as Ceylan has become, can't be subsumed by mere reference to their peers or predecessors – this is certainly his most ambitious and experimental (and longest, most expensive and most talky) film to date.

Soon after the scenes quoted above, the doctor, Cemal, is moved to quote a Romantic poet: "Still the years will pass and not a trace will remain of me. Darkness and cold will enfold my weary ➔

**SYNOPSIS** A working-class town on the Belgian coast, the 1960s. Pim is a secretive, slightly fastidious ten-year-old. His single mother Yvette is a regular at the local Texas bar, where she uses her accordion-playing skills to impress potential male suitors. In his mother's absence, Pim experiments with her perfumes, make-up and old beauty-contest costume. He spends much of his time at the house of friendly neighbour Marcella, her ten-year-old daughter Sabrina and handsome 12-year-old son Gino.

Five years later, the confident, outgoing Gino encourages Pim to engage in mutual masturbation in the shed where Gino stores his new motorcycle. Pim is smitten; he keeps the sock into which Gino ejaculates and gives it pride of place in his secret box of treasured objects. In the summer, Pim shares a tent with Gino, and they make love. Sabrina, who has a crush on Pim, infers their relationship and has to be bribed to keep quiet. Gino starts working in nearby Dunkirk, where he meets French girlfriend Françoise. Spying Gino and Françoise making love, Pim is crestfallen; he lets down the tyres on Gino's motorcycle. Later, Gino moves to Dunkirk, leaving Pim devastated. Pim's misery is lessened somewhat when his mother takes in handsome lodger Zoltan, a circus worker. Zoltan soon disappears, however, along with Pim's mother, Marcella, always poorly, is terminally ill. Pim decides to discard childish things: he goes to the sand dunes to burn his box of drawings and fetishes, then dashes naked into the sea. Gino returns home for his mother's funeral; he and Pim unite with a kiss.

**SYNOPSIS** Central Anatolia, early winter, at night. Yasar, Kenan and Kenan's slow-witted younger brother Ramazan are sharing drinks and a meal.

On an evening some time later, at dusk, a train of three packed cars – containing Doctor Cemal, Prosecutor Nusret, local police commissioner Naci, driver Arap Ali, Kenan (who has confessed to Yasar's murder and burial), Ramazan and various army gendarmes, grave diggers and helpers – pulls up on a lonely mountain roadside to carry out the first in a series of searches for Yasar's burial place. The official party later spend the early hours as guests of the mayor of a local village, where Kenan – moved to tears by the ghostly appearance of the mayor's pretty daughter – lets out that he is the father of Yasar's son. Kenan then takes the party to the place where the victim is found in a shallow grave. Ramazan cries, mainly unheard, that he is in fact Yasar's murderer.

Later, outside the town's courthouse, Kenan spies among an angry crowd Yasar's son and widow; the boy hits Kenan with a rock. Cemal concludes a running conversation with Prosecutor Nusret about the self-predicted and mysterious death of the wife of Nusret's 'friend'; it becomes clear that Nusret has in fact been talking about his own wife, who may have committed suicide. Cemal performs an autopsy on Yasar. He fakes evidence to suggest that Yasar was buried alive, so that presumed perpetrator Kenan will face lesser charges.





A film by Céline Sciamma

# tomboy

★★★★★  
"Beautifully observed"  
The Telegraph

★★★★★  
"Exceptionally upbeat"  
Psychologies

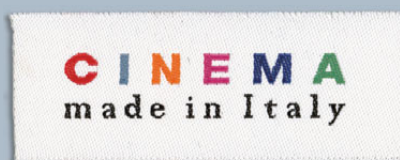
★★★★★  
"Adorable"  
Time Out

★★★★★  
"Absolutely terrific"  
Dave Aldridge, BBC Live

★★★★★  
"An uplifting joy"  
Sunday Mirror

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← soul." Overhearing him, the Prosecutor reproves him: "One day you may get a kick out of the stuff going on here. When you have a family, you'll have a story to tell... You can tell it to your son as if it were a fairytale."

So is *Anatolia* a fairytale? A ghost story? A parable about modern Turkey, or about corrupted fathers and their suffering sons? It's certainly not your usual police procedural. In scenes that brilliantly border-raid across satire and tragedy, farce and naturalism, Ceylan pokes serious fun at police/army/prosecuting department methods, protocols and procedures – for instance in the scene where hapless helper Hayrettin bickers about who left the body bag behind, or when Prosecutor Nusret argues the toss with a gendarme sergeant about whether the team is a kilometre over the communal jurisdiction. You could call it Chekhovian 'comedy'. Ceylan is using detail here to make a larger point, one in concert with the conversation he dramatises in all his films between the 'sophisticated' urban Turkish landscape and its 'backward', impoverished or otherwise 'culturally other' ancient 'homeland' (magnificently shot at dusk, night and dawn in widescreen by Gökhan Tiryaki). He has his own way with 'talk' too, not least the character-revealing banter in cars. What's most startling, perhaps, is his sense of mystery – most notably, most intriguingly, the mystery surrounding women for his uniformly bemused male characters. We see this in an irreducible (and irreducibly beautiful) sequence showing the effect on the men of an 'apparition' by lamplight of the local mayor's 'angelic' young daughter (Cansu Demirci). It's an example of magical filmmaking, set quite firmly in the all-too-real world.

♥♦ Wally Hammond

## CREDITS

**Producer**  
Zeynep Ozbatur Atakan  
**Written by**  
Ercan Kesal  
Ebru Ceylan  
Nuri Bilge Ceylan  
**Story**  
Bora Gökşingöl  
Nuri Bilge Ceylan  
**Director of Photography**  
Gökhan Tiryaki  
**Art Director**  
Dilek Yapkuöz Ayaztuna  
**Sound Editor**  
Thomas Robert  
**Costume Designers**  
Meral Efe  
Nildag Batur  
Özlem Batur

©Zeyno Film,  
Production2006  
d.o.o.Sarajevo, 1000 Volt  
Post Production,  
Türkiye Radyo  
Televizyon Kurumu  
(TRT), İmaj, Fida Film,  
NBC Film  
**Production Companies**  
A Zeyno Film,  
Production2006  
d.o.o.Sarajevo, 1000 Volt  
Post Production,  
Türkiye Radyo  
Televizyon Kurumu  
(TRT), İmaj, Fida Film,  
NBC Film co-production  
With contributions from  
Eurimages  
In collaboration 1000  
Volt Post Production

## CAST

**Muhammet Uzunur**  
Doctor Cemal  
**Yilmaz Erdogan**  
Commissioner Naci  
**Taner Bırsel**  
Prosecutor Nusret  
**Ahmet Mümtaz Taylan**  
Arap Ali, driver  
**Firat Tanis**  
Kenan, suspect  
**Ercan Kesal**  
Muhtar  
**Erol Eraslan**  
Yasar, victim  
**Ugur Arslanoglu**  
Tevfik, court driver  
**Murat Kilic**  
Izzet, police officer  
**Safak Karali**  
Abidin, court recorder  
**Emre Sen**  
Sergeant Onder  
**Burhan Yildiz**  
Ramazan, suspect  
**Nihan Okutucu**  
Gülnaz

**Dolby Digital**  
**In Colour**  
[2.35:1]  
**Subtitles**

**Distributor**  
New Wave Films

**14,177 ft +9 frames**

Turkish theatrical title  
**Bir zamanlar**  
**Anadolu'da**

# One for the Money

USA 2011

Director: Julie Anne Robinson

Certificate 12A 91m 4s

There's a quote that's attributed, in various bowdlerised versions, to *The New Yorker's* Pauline Kael, which stands as a classic example of liberal provincialism, something like: "I can't believe Nixon won. I don't know anyone who voted for him." I will confess to feeling something of the same incredulity – and in so doing, reveal my own film-snob provincialism – when it comes to the fabled existence of Katherine Heigl fans. Are they real? Where do these people live? What do they look like? Are they the same people who underwrite Gerard Butler's career? How do they sleep at night?

Whatever the case, *One for the Money*, a film whose title is too stunningly apt to bear comment, has evidently been conceived as an opportunity for La Heigl, that high-wattage grin floating Cheshire-like in a nullity of screen presence, to expand her range. As bounty hunter Stephanie Plum, heroine of Janet Evanovich's bestselling novels (presently on their 18th instalment), creamy-blond Heigl gets a brunette wash, lugs around a Big Gulp drink because she's so totally déclassé and, in a wavering tri-state accent, delivers enough exposition via voiceover to drive Robert McKee to drink. Teuton Heigl is playing, presumably, East Coast Italo-Jewish-Irish, folded together into an ambiguous 'saucy ethnicity'; there are a few embarrassing family dinner scenes involving noisy genuflection, and Debbie Reynolds as Plum's hilariously Brash Grandparent™, who says outrageous things like, "Who wouldn't enjoy a nice thong?"

Investigating the case of her old flame Joe Morelli leads Plum through

**SYNOPSIS** Trenton, New Jersey, the present. Single thirtysomething Stephanie Plum, recently fired from her job at a department store, begins work as a bail enforcement agent for her cousin Vinnie. Her first assignment is to bring in Joe Morelli, once the cocky high-school heartthrob who took her virginity, now a policeman who's jumped bail after being accused of shooting an unarmed man. Plum is tutored in target shooting by experienced bounty hunter Ranger. After a number of flirtatious encounters with Morelli, Plum becomes convinced of his innocence; witnesses to the shooting are found dead. Plum and Morelli team up and follow the trail to Benito Ramirez, an MMA fighter with a history of violence. Surviving a confrontation with Ramirez and his manager Jimmy Alpha, Plum brings in Morelli, whose name is promptly cleared.

Morelli arrives at Plum's apartment bearing the gift of a cupcake...



Magnum farce: Heigl, Sunjata

an underworld Trenton, New Jersey, that bears no resemblance, even incidental, to any actual social reality, and allows her to rub shoulders with a supporting cast of colourful non-whites. The mean streets of Trenton provide the backdrop to the wish-fulfilment fantasy of the Plum books, acting as a safely risqué setting for flirting with hot, dangerous guys – see the flirtily brandished handcuffs in the promotional poster, with their mild hints of rough sex – though of course nothing *really* out-of-control happens to Plum. Doing the eye-candy duties here are Daniel Sunjata, as fellow bounty hunter Ranger, and Jason O'Mara as Morelli, displaying a total lack of chemistry with Heigl while mouthing unsupportable cool-cat lines ("Ancient history – like the pyramids, baby").

The creative intentions aim no higher than the checkout counter, but the final product is so clumsily made and so entirely free of charm as to fall well short. The only redeeming feature of *One for the Money* is that it is highly unlikely to spawn a single sequel, much less 17. ♥♦ Nick Pinkerton

## CREDITS

**Producer**  
Sidney Kimmel  
**Produced by**  
Wendy Finerman  
Tom Rosenberg  
Gary Lucchesi  
**Screenplay**  
Stacy Sherman  
Karen Ray  
Liz Brixius  
Based on the novel by  
Janet Evanovich  
**Director of Photography**  
James Whitaker  
**Editor**  
Lisa Zeno Churgin  
**Production Designer**  
Franco-Giacomo  
Carbone  
**Music**  
Deborah Luxie  
**Sound Mixer**  
Danny Michael  
**Costume Designer**  
Michael Dennison

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LLC and Lions Gate  
Films Inc.

**Production Companies**  
Lionsgate and  
Lakeshore  
Entertainment present a  
Lakeshore  
Entertainment,  
Lionsgate, Wendy  
Finerman production in  
association with Sidney  
Kimmel Entertainment,  
Abishag Productions  
**Executive Producers**  
Eric Reid

Andre Lamal  
Bruce Toll  
Katherine Heigl  
Nancy Heigl

## CAST

**Katherine Heigl**  
Stephanie Plum  
**Jason O'Mara**  
Joseph Morelli  
**Daniel Sunjata**  
ranger  
**John Leguizamo**  
Jimmy Alpha  
**Sherri Shepherd**  
Lula  
**Debbie Reynolds**  
Grandma Mazur  
**Debra Monk**  
Mrs Plum  
**Nate Mooney**  
Eddie Gazarra  
**Adam Paul**  
Bernie Kuntz  
**Fisher Stevens**  
Morty Beyers  
**Ana Reeder**  
Connie  
**Patrick Fischler**  
Vinnie Plum  
**Gavin-Keith Umeh**  
Benito Ramirez

**Dolby Digital/DTS/**  
**SDDS**  
**Colour by**  
DeLuxe  
[2.35:1]

**Distributor**  
Entertainment Film  
Distributors Ltd

**8,196 ft +5 frames**

# Return

USA 2011

Director: Liza Johnson

The plight of army personnel coming home from war hasn't gone unexamined in recent cinema – *The Lucky Ones*, *Stop-Loss* and both *Brothers* have all dramatised the experiences of returning soldiers. Where Liza Johnson's purposely modest and beautifully played drama breaks new ground is that the person reeling at the change from Kabul to K-Mart is a woman. Deliberately avoiding any political stance on the War on Terror, *Return* elects to take a sympathetic, close-up look at the effect that wartime service has on young mother Kelli, who returns from a year with the National Guard in Afghanistan to a home life in Ohio that not only doesn't fit anymore, but that flays her in unexpected ways.

Johnson researched the film with US Army personnel and it feels deeply rooted in their everyday experiences. As Kelli was a non-combatant ("I saw some dead people. But mostly I saw giant amounts of supplies"), the film never dives into the combat flashbacks or showy PTSD-induced breakdown that we're somehow expecting. Instead of melodrama there's a pervasive sense of dislocation, as Kelli quits the factory job that seems "small and pointless" and slides into numbing bouts of drinking as she struggles fruitlessly to make a connection with her husband and children.

Since we see the entire story from Kelli's perspective, Linda Cardellini's subtle, alienated performance has to carry the film, which it does impressively. She radiates a convincing frustration at small-town life, which is succeeded by muffled panic when she's ordered to mobilise for Afghanistan again. Michael Shannon is first-rate as the supportive house-husband whose forgiveness for "anything that happened over there" masks his own on-going adultery. With the exception of a showily blue-collar turn from *Mad Men's* John Slattery as an Iraq veteran too deep in booze and OxyContin to save Kelli from her demons, it's all pleasingly unforced.

Johnson makes a point of giving *Return* a determinedly domestic setting, scaling down its scope to emphasise how jolting the leap from adrenalised wartime worker to everyday school-gate mom is for servicewomen. She opts for Dardenne Brothers-style rust-belt realism and a textured, near-documentary feel, which is occasionally so oblique as to obscure the plot temporarily. Anne Etheridge's mobile camera sticks to Kelli like white on rice, soaking up her alienation from the inane chatter of her girlfriends and the ever-blaring TV. Rather than a dramatic arc, the story is composed of the fumbling accommodations of ordinary life – humiliating attempts to get pregnant to avoid returning to Afghanistan fail ignominiously, a dash to Canada with her daughters peters out into a deflated return. Best of all is the



film's obstinate refusal of the obligatory war-zone revelation, since the guarded Kelli has no lurid tale for the pestering friends and the AA counsellor who demand a pop-psychology glimpse of the horrors of war. Our only window into her wartime world is a flash of the dangers she dodged on a daily basis: "I didn't get raped in a Porta-Potty, I didn't carry a dead body and I didn't get blown up by an IED." Like its heroine, *Return* offers up a fragile stoicism for inspection, and what it lacks in easy catharsis it makes up in emotional eloquence. **♥♥ Kate Stables**

## CREDITS

### Producers

Noah Harlan  
Ben Howe  
Liza Johnson

### Written by

Liza Johnson

### Cinematographer

Anne Etheridge

### Film Editor

Paul Zucker

### Production Designer

Inbal Weinberg

### Composer/Score

T. Griffin

### Sound Design

Chen Harpaz

### Costume Designer

Erika Munro

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**Production Companies**  
Fork Films presents a 2.1 Films/True Enough production in association with Meredith Vieira Productions  
A film by Liza Johnson  
Supported by the Sundance Institute Feature Film Program, with additional support from the Sundance Institute/Annenberg Feature Film Fellowship, the Sundance Institute Cinereach Feature Film

Fellowship, and the Sundance Institute/Maryland Film Fellowship  
With support from Cinereach  
**Executive Producers**  
Abigail Disney  
Meredith Vieira  
Amy Rapp

## CAST

Linda Cardellini

Kelli

Michael Shannon

Mike

Talia Balsam

Julie

Paul Sparks

Ed

Rosie Benton

Brooke

Louisa Krause

Shannon

James Murtaugh

Mr Miller

Bonnie Swencionis

Cara Lee

Emma Lyle

Jackie

John Slattery

Bud

**Dolby Digital**

**In Colour**

**[L.85:1]**

**Distributor**

Network Releasing

# Safe House

USA/Japan 2011

Director: Daniel Espinosa

Certificate 15 114m 50s

**Spoiler alert: this review gives away a major plot twist**

From the studio that brought you the Bourne movies – with a soupçon of *Training Day*. Swedish director Daniel Espinosa was hired on the strength of 2010's *Snabba Cash*, a stylish parable of the crash as yet unreleased in the UK or US, but through some feat of Hollywood anti-alchemy the result is a routine cycle of fights, chases and exposition, rendered in the choppy, shaky style familiar from the two Greengrass Bourne films and recently laid to rest by Soderbergh's *Haywire*.

Whereas *Snabba Cash* revealed a contemporary immigrant Stockholm unknown to outsiders, *Safe House's* South African locations barely register as backdrop; the film could be set anywhere, and in fact almost was – the original location was South America. As in the Bourne movies, the CIA is running a secret black-ops programme alongside its usual above-board day-to-day business, and rookie agent Matt Weston (Ryan Reynolds) gets on the wrong side of it when he rescues captive ex-agent Tobin Frost (Denzel Washington) from a team of assassins. Going on the run, Weston struggles to figure out the identity of their pursuers as Frost tries to 'get in his head', not all that effectively. Meanwhile Weston's bosses, one of whom is in cahoots with the bad guys, argue among themselves. Eventually, after a big shootout that leaves everyone half-dead, Frost stops playing mind games and comes clean: he has dirt on the agency and that's why it has sent a team to kill him. Before dying he passes his information to Weston, who in turn (like Bourne at the end of *The Bourne Ultimatum*) publishes and absconds.

While Jason Bourne had his mind erased and eventually had to confront and atone for his own complicity in the CIA's actions, Weston is a chump, albeit a contradictory one. He's both a nice guy – his girlfriend is convinced he works for an NGO – and an excellent liar – his girlfriend is convinced he

works for an NGO – but also barely an agent at all, working under his own name in an innocuous posting, raising the question of why he would need to convince his girlfriend he works for an NGO. Though educated at Yale, he apparently never read a newspaper before joining the CIA or since: while observing his colleagues waterboarding Frost during an interrogation, he asks – shocked, shocked! – whether it's legal. He has little or no field experience but is miraculously good at fighting and killing people who do it full-time. It doesn't help that Ryan Reynolds has a singularly weak hold on the screen, while Denzel Washington treats the script with the nonchalance it probably deserves.

Mostly confined to a control room set familiar from you-know-what, Vera Farmiga and Brendan Gleeson take on the Joan Allen and Brian Cox roles. One never felt Allen and Cox (and, in *Ultimatum*, David Strathairn) were slumming it, because Tony Gilroy's dialogue, a terse lexicon of "full envelope intrusion" and "going mobile" was, within its idiom, so good. *Safe House*, however, calls for a code ten abort. **♥♥ Henry K. Miller**

## CREDITS

**Produced by**

Scott Stuber

**Written by**

David Guggenheim

**Director of**

**Photography**

Oliver Wood

**Editor**

Richard Pearson

**Production Designer**

Brigitte Broch

**Music**

Ramin Djawadi

**Sound Designers**

Peter Staubli

Dino R. DiMuro

Christopher Assells

**Costume Designer**

Susan Aversano

**Stunt Co-ordinator**

Greg Powell

**Fight Co-ordinator**

Oliver Schneider

**©Universal Studios**

**Production**

**Companies**

Universal Pictures

presents in association

with Relativity Media a

Bluegrass Films

production

In association with

Dentsu, Inc.

**Executive Producers**

Adam Merims

Scott Aversano

Alexa Faigen

Trevor Macy

Marc D. Evans

## CAST

**Denzel Washington**

Tobin Frost

**Ryan Reynolds**

Matt Weston

**Vera Farmiga**

Catherine Linklater

**Brendan Gleeson**

David Barlow

**Sam Shepard**

Harlan Whitford

**Rubén Blades**

Carlos Villar

**Nora Arnezeder**

Ana Moreau

**Robert Patrick**

Daniel Kiefer

**Liam Cunningham**

Alec Wade

**Joel Kinnaman**

Keller

**Fares Fares**

Vargas

**Dolby Digital/**

**Datasat/SDDS**

**Colour by**

DeLuxe

**[2.35:1]**

**Part-subtitled**

**Distributor**

Universal Pictures

International UK & Eire

**10,335 ft +0 frames**

# StreetDance 2

United Kingdom/  
Germany/Italy 2012

Directors: Max and Dania

For anyone keen on film taxonomy, might I suggest that the recent crop of streetdance movies is surely the cross-media offspring of teen cinema and MTV music videos, with a hefty shot of TV-talent-show DNA injected for extra kicks? Then viewers bewildered by the scanty plotting and wafer-thin characterisations of *StreetDance 2* could stop thinking of it as a dramatic feature film in the traditional sense.

Kicks of the literal kind, along with eye-grabbing hip-hop moves like body-popping, krumping and so on, have always been the main attraction in urban dance movies, from *Flashdance* (1983) through ballerina-meets-B-boy tales like *Save the Last Dance* (2001). But since *Step Up 3D* and this film's predecessor *StreetDance 3D* introduced the added novelty of lengthy stereoscopic dance routines, fully rounded narratives have been squeezed out by unabashed spectacle. Think of it as a return to the cinema of attractions.

*StreetDance 2*, whose underdog hero Ash teaches a motley streetdance crew a new Latin/street style to win a European competition, doesn't just have a cookie-cutter urban dance film plot. It's an unapologetic retreat of the very successful *StreetDance 3D*, simply changing the protagonist's sex and their city. Happily, this time around the dance elements are a far better mix than the previous slightly awkward synthesis of ballet and beats, with flamboyant salsa routines melding deftly into hip-hop stylings.

Returning co-directors Max Giwa and Dania Pasquini wisely shoot the dance sequences (which comprise a good two-thirds of the film's content, between rehearsals and dance battles) to showcase the limber talent of well-known hip-hop dance performers like Lil Steph. They've little truck though, with the Hollywood-musical maxim that dances should be as expressive as dialogue scenes, with the exception of a blindfolded tango that teaches Ash to partner Eva, his Latin love interest. Instead the film's routines exuberantly show off crew members' trademark moves, breathtakingly athletic choreography by Madonna/Michael Jackson veterans Rich and Tone, and some stunning visuals. The dance battles are effectively pumped up by a solid soundtrack that likes its beats fast and its bass down low.

Performances aren't the film's forte, and thankfully the minimally animated Falk Hentschel doesn't need much range for scriptwriter Jane English's barebones dialogue. But dancer-turned-actress Sofia Boutella puts some real passion into Eva, and her edgy salsa dance numbers are a welcome antidote to the sickly impressive but samey hip-hop routines of real-life UK crews like *Britain's Got Talent* finalists Flawless, appearing here as friendly rivals The Surge.

*StreetDance 2's* chief selling point is

**SYNOPSIS** Ohio, present day. National Guard volunteer Kelli returns happily to her young family after a year's deployment in Afghanistan. She soon feels alienated and bored by small-town life. She quits her factory job, and discovers that her husband Mike is cheating on her with a local woman. Asking for her job back, she finds out that the factory is closing. When Kelli falls asleep at the wheel after a drinking spree, she is arrested for drunk driving. She forgets to pick up her eldest daughter from school. Kelli and her husband separate. Sent to Alcoholics Anonymous as part of her sentencing, she meets rebellious Iraq War veteran Bud, who understands her alienation. Kelli receives another mobilisation order for Afghanistan, and is horrified. She has a one-night stand with Bud (and discovers that he's an OxyContin abuser) and another with an ex-colleague. Both times she tries and fails to get pregnant, to avoid being sent overseas again. Kelli sets off to drive to Canada with her two young daughters, but turns around and takes them home again. Finally we see her sitting at the airport departure gate in uniform, waiting to fly back to Afghanistan.

**SYNOPSIS** Cape Town, the present. Fugitive ex-CIA agent Tobin Frost is pursued through the streets by a gang of assassins after purchasing and injecting into his torso a cache of files from a rogue MI6 spy. Surrounded, Frost turns himself in at the US consulate.

Catherine Linklater, CIA branch chief in Langley, Virginia, deploys a team from Johannesburg to question Frost at a safe house. They are beginning to torture Frost when the house is attacked by a group of armed men. Frost escapes with the help of the rookie 'housekeeper' Matt Weston. Both Weston and Linklater, impeded by her superior officer David Barlow, try to understand who raided the safe house and how they discovered its location. Frost, a former recruiter, attempts to manipulate Weston into letting him go by making him see that the CIA regards him as expendable. Weston discovers that Frost's enemies work for a black-ops unit within the CIA, and that the information Frost has could incriminate many of those in charge.

In a fight at a remote safe house, Frost is mortally wounded, as is his main pursuer Vargas and Barlow, who has killed Linklater in an attempt to protect the secret unit and himself. Frost passes his information to Weston before he dies. At Langley, Weston is offered a promotion in return for his silence, but decides to make the information public and go on the run.





The only way is up: Sofia Boutella

celebrating the body in motion, and its confident and unflashy use of 3D allows the routines, particularly the climactic arena dance battle, to erupt out of the screen. Dance on film (whether pop culture or high culture like *Pina*) makes for a natural fit with the new technology. Bar occasional flurries of popcorn or pillow-fight feathers tumbling out of the screen (it's a tween-appeal movie, after all), the film's 3D is gratifyingly well integrated and short on gimmickry.

Like many British sequels looking to widen their market, the film has moderated the homegrown, grime-driven feel of *StreetDance 3D*. An American lead, high-profile US choreographers and a travelogue view of Paris give it a glossier but more generic look, despite its sprinkling of British talent-show alumni. So it will be interesting to see whether UK audiences embrace this version as enthusiastically (and as lucratively) as they did its predecessor.

◆◆ Kate Stables

## CREDITS

### Directors

Max and Dania  
[i.e. Max Giwa  
Dania Pasquini]

### Produced by

Allan Niblo  
James Richardson

### Written by

Jane English

### Director of Photography

Sam McCurdy

### Editor

Tim Murrell

### Production Designer

Richard Bullock

### Original Music

### Composed

Lloyd Perrin

Jordan Crisp

### Sound Design

Manuel Laval

### Costume Designer

Andrew Cox

### Choreography

Rich + Tone Talauega

**Latin Choreography**  
Maykel Fontes, Sharna Burgess

@Streetdance 2  
Distribution Limited/  
British Film Institute/  
BBC/Film1 GmbH & Co  
KG/Eagle Pictures S.P.A

### Production Companies

Vertigo Films, BBC Films  
and BFI present in  
association with  
SquareOne  
Entertainment  
supported by Deutscher  
FilmForderFund a  
Vertigo Films production  
in co-production with  
Film1/Eagle Pictures  
Made with the support  
of the National Lottery  
through the British Film  
Institute's Film Fund  
Supported by  
Deutscher  
FilmForderFonds

### Executive Producers

Rupert Preston  
Nick Love  
Nigel Williams  
Christine Langan  
Al Munteanu

## CAST

Falk Hentschel

Ash

Sofia Boutella

Eva

George Sampson

Eddie

Flawless

Entertainment

The Surge Crew

Tom Conti

Manu

Stephanie Nguyen 'Lil

Steph

Delphine Nguyen

'Deydey'

Yoyo

Niek Traa

Legend

Elisabetta Di Dario

'Betty Style'

Barn Barn

Samuel Revell 'Bboy

Sambo'

Tino

Kaito Masai 'Kite'

Terabyte

Ali Ramdani 'Lilou'

Ali

Ndedi Ma-Sellu

'Dedson'

Killa

Dolby Digital

In Colour

[1.85:1]

Some screenings

presented in 3D

Distributor

Vertigo Films

# This Is Not a Film

Iran 2011

Director: Jafar Panahi

Certificate U 74m 41s

*This Is Not a Film* – the title of Jafar Panahi's co-authored, or perhaps non-authored, work – may be ironic, but it's far from a mere conceptual gag. Deeming his work critical of the current regime, the Iranian government has indeed banned Panahi from making films, as well as condemning him to six years in prison (a sentence also imposed on his colleague Mohammad Rasoulof, although his was reduced to one year last October). But how exactly would the Iranian government define 'filmmaking', or even 'a film'? Early on, a phone message comes from Panahi's son announcing that he has switched on his camcorder, ready to record Panahi's day. Apparently, Panahi should not even pick up a camera.

Later, however, Panahi undertakes certain seemingly innocent gestures – picking up and turning on his camcorder, filming on his iPhone – acts that assume the proportions of serious transgression. But surely just pointing a camera isn't the same as making a film? Panahi ponders the question with due seriousness. He makes a virtual film by describing and acting out his most recent script, rejected by the censors. Surely that's not forbidden, he remarks – and surely to have his friend Mirtahmasb record his actions doesn't mean that they're making a film as such, just thinking about film in the presence of a camera. They're doing what comes naturally: as Mirtahmasb says, "When hairdressers have nothing to do, they cut each other's hair."

Of course, once Panahi starts describing his film, he's not just acting but effectively directing – sans crew, sans actors, but still calling the shots as he marks out a patch of carpet to denote his heroine's space. Significantly, his unrealised project is about imprisonment – the story of a young woman whose parents lock her in rather than let her attend university. In his own imprisonment, Panahi experiences a form of emasculation, in which he's dependent on his female lawyer, heard on the phone cautiously discussing prospects of his sentence being reduced (it wasn't). Significantly, he identifies himself with two female protagonists, the heroine of his unmade film, and the little girl who acted in his 1997 film *The Mirror* and stormed out on camera – an option not available to Panahi in his real-life drama.

It's characteristic of the self-reflexive trend in Iranian cinema that Panahi has found himself musing on film through film, just when he might justifiably be disinclined to feel philosophically playful. Not usually Iran's most self-conscious director, Panahi has made a provocative category-testing exercise (essay? documentary? staged mock-doc?) to rank alongside Abbas Kiarostami's *Close-Up* (1990) and Mohsen Makhmalbaf's

*A Moment of Innocence* (1996).

Significantly, the one English title prominently displayed on Panahi's DVD shelves is *Buried*. Alone until Mirtahmasb arrives, Panahi communicates with the world at one remove – by phone or by watching TV, which shows coverage of the Japanese floods (Panahi's acknowledgement that others have it bad too). Tehran is seen only at a distance from Panahi's balcony, embodied by noises off: at first, what sounds like demonstrations (reports come by telephone about road blocks and police checking cars for cameras), then at night a noisy fireworks celebration; the final shot, however, with Panahi nearly but not quite leaving his building, suggests that the city may be in flames in more than just a celebratory fashion. Meanwhile Panahi shares house arrest with his daughter's pet iguana Igi (a natural scene-stealer and a great stone-faced comic) who contrives to find greater freedom in enclosure than Panahi, climbing up bookcases and wherever he pleases.

Finally, Panahi hangs out with Hassan, a young student who is the building's stand-in caretaker and who (supposedly) cheerfully blunders into shot. Hassan's intelligent, personable presence provides an energetic infusion of morale-boosting camaraderie. It also proves that a film can be made anywhere – in a flat, in the confines of a lift even – and still be compelling, still be a film.

But then, this isn't a film, remember – and the makers' collaborators, their names discreetly redacted in the credits, aren't really their collaborators (explicit mention is made of the dangers faced by Iranian filmmakers who help or support Panahi, and indeed Mirtahmasb was arrested after the film was made, on charges of espionage). This modest, economical work is a bold and moving – and against the odds, highly entertaining – act of artistic and political defiance, and was first screened in Cannes last May after being put on a USB stick smuggled out of Iran in a cake. This is not a film, but a message in a bottle, and – despite Panahi's impending imprisonment – a message of hope and encouragement.

◆◆ Jonathan Romney

## CREDITS

### An effort by

Jafar Panahi  
Mojtaba Mirtahmasb

### In Colour

[1.78:1]

### Subtitles

### Distributor

Palisades Tartan Ltd

6,721 ft +8 frames

Iranian theatrical title

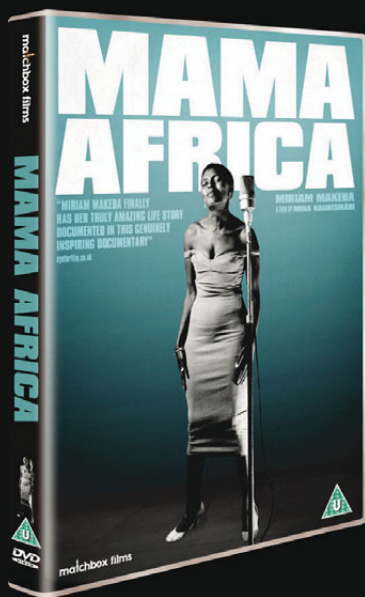
In film nist

**SYNOPSIS** Tehran. Filmmaker Jafar Panahi waits alone in his apartment, under house arrest pending appeal on a six-year prison sentence and facing a 20-year ban on making films. He invites his friend Mojtaba Mirtahmasb to film him while he acts out a script for an unrealised project; the two men film each other and watch clips from Panahi's work. Later, Panahi films stand-in caretaker Hassan as he collects rubbish from the residents; he follows Hassan to street level, where a fireworks celebration is happening.



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# This Means War

USA 2012

Director: McG

Certificate 12A 97m 34s

The first ten minutes of *This Means War* retread the generic opening of many a buddy action film. CIA agents Tuck (Tom Hardy) and FDR (Chris Pine) are in Hong Kong to round up baddie Heinrich (Til Schweiger) and his brother (their crimes unspecified, their foreignness unquestionable). Tuck is a sensitive Brit, FDR a callow horndog American; they're best friends of script convenience. They're supposed to pull the operation off quietly but predictably havoc ensues, with Heinrich's sibling falling to his poorly blue-screened death. The duo are recalled to CIA headquarters (in Los Angeles), where boss Collins (Angela Bassett) chews them out and confines them to desk work for the time being.

Enter Lauren (Reese Witherspoon), an implausibly lonely single gal forcibly pushed into online dating by best friend Trish (Chelsea Handler). Her first assignation is with Tuck, who's lonely and separated from his ex-wife Kelly (Leela Savasta). Tuck and Lauren hit it off with some sparkling banter (Lauren on whether she has kids: "Not that I know of"). Their date ends well but then FDR hits on Lauren at a video store, unaware she's his buddy's would-be girl. Complications, a shift to generic romcom convention and a romantic-rivalry rift in the men's friendship ensue before Heinrich's inevitable re-emergence.

There are a few gunfights and chases but mostly *This Means War* is a low-grade romantic comedy in which two friends make fools out of themselves fighting for the affections of a woman. The characterisation is piecemeal: we learn that Lauren loves Gustav Klimt and likes to spend her nights bouncing around to Montell Jordan's 'This Is How We Do It' while *Butch Cassidy* and the *Sundance Kid* plays on her TV (director McG is free to show clips from older films as long as they belong to parent company 20th Century Fox). This is arbitrary, but nothing compared to whole scenes that don't serve any evident purpose, such as Heinrich appearing in a tailor's shop (in "London, England", as titles helpfully inform us) to gloweringly order a suit made of a certain kind of fabric he doesn't want to see anyone else ever wearing – a suit that's never seen.

Given the current CGI-murk-and-colour-corrected state of the action film, former music-video director McG has become practically a classicist since his feature debut with *Charlie's Angels* in 2000: he prefers natural-looking, and pushes the film stock (itself an anachronism) for graininess at the outset. The script seems exhumed from a decade ago, with its bricks-and-mortar video-store set piece and stale online dating jokes, and the whole film looks cheap. Hardy and Pine are quick and alert, while Witherspoon mugs her



The spies who loved me: Tom Hardy, Chris Pine, Reese Witherspoon

way through an incoherent part. (Best friend Chelsea Handler seems like a robot programmed to make vagina and vodka jokes on endless demand.) Generic action-romance splices like this are fortunately a

dying breed: from its no-motive baddies to its arbitrarily written protagonists, *This Means War* is like a bunch of rewrites brought to filmed life from arbitrarily jumbled drafts.

♦♦ Vadim Rizov

## CREDITS

**Produced by**  
Robert Simonds  
James Lassiter  
Will Smith  
Simon Kinberg  
**Screenplay**  
Timothy Dowling  
Simon Kinberg  
**Story**  
Timothy Dowling  
Marcus Gautesen  
**Director of Photography**  
Russell Carpenter  
**Film Editor**  
Nicolas de Toth  
**Production Designer**  
Martin Laing  
**Music**  
Christophe Beck  
**Sound Designer**  
Derek Vanderhorst  
**Costume Designer**  
Sophie de Rakoff  
**Stunt Co-ordinators**  
Jeff Habberstad  
Joey Box

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**Production Companies**  
An Overbrook Entertainment/Robert Simonds Company production  
A McG film  
A Twentieth Century Fox presentation  
Made in association with Dune Entertainment

**Executive Producers**  
Michael Green  
Jeffrey Evan Kwatinetz  
Brent O'Connor  
Lisa Stewart

## CAST

**Reese Witherspoon**  
Lauren Scott  
**Chris Pine**  
Franklin Delano Roosevelt Foster, 'FDR'  
**Tom Hardy**  
James, 'Tuck'  
**Til Schweiger**  
Heinrich  
**Angela Bassett**  
Collins  
**Rosemary Harris**  
Nana Foster  
**Chelsea Handler**  
Trish  
**Abigail Leigh Spencer**  
Katie  
**John Paul Ruttan**  
Joe  
**George Touliatos**  
Grandpa Foster

**Clint Carleton**  
Jonas  
**Warren Christie**  
Steve  
**Leela Savasta**  
Kelly  
**Mike Dopud**  
Ivan

**Dolby Digital/SDDS**  
**In Colour**  
**Prints by**  
DeLuxe  
[2.35:1]

**Distributor**  
20th Century Fox International (UK)

8,781 ft +0 frames

# This Must Be the Place

Italy/France/Ireland 2011

Director: Paolo Sorrentino

For many a hotshot European auteur, there comes a time when the challenge of shooting on American soil presents itself. For every enduring *Paris, Texas* and *Zabriskie Point*, however, there's a misbegotten *Arizona Dream* or *Twentynine Palms*, and given that Paolo Sorrentino is hardly a risk-averse filmmaker, clearly this is one that could go either way. One constant in Sorrentino's dazzling progress since 2004's *The Consequences of Love* has been his tendency to shape strikingly visualised stories around ostensibly unsympathetic male protagonists, from that film's hotel-dwelling misfit businessman to the vile moneylender in *The Family Friend* (2006) and the weirdly reptilian rendition of Teflon politico Giulio Andreotti in *Il Divo* (2008).

That changes here, since Sean Penn's retired rock star Cheyenne – whose eyeliner and goth hairdo make him a ringer for The Cure's Robert Smith – is clearly someone slightly adrift in the modern world, yet rather endearingly so. It's a brilliant performance, Penn creating a character who speaks and moves to his own spacey rhythm. Here's a childlike individual whose halting speech suggests a lack of confidence, a reluctance to re-engage with the adult world after a lucrative pop career ended with fan suicides. It's clear early on in the film that we're meant to perceive him as someone who needs to grow up and get back into the real world, yet Cheyenne is such a sweetie (down purely to Penn's megawatt charisma) that the imperative towards transformation and renewal really isn't strong enough to power the narrative forward.

A notably slack opening reel – set in Dublin, where Cheyenne now shares a mansion with his wife Jane – is another near-insurmountable problem, since twinkly Penn aside (and notwithstanding Frances McDormand's efforts in the underwritten supportive-spouse role), the Dublin-based characters generate little impact. This proves especially problematic when a key subplot, involving a mother who's put her life on hold after her son's unexpected departure, is later expected to play a significant role in the final moments, and rings extremely hollow when called on to do so. It's telling that the US release version amends Sorrentino's Cannes cut with a clunky explicatory voiceover from the McDormand character, marking an ill-fated attempt to tie her character into the story and clarify the Dublin section of the plot. At the time of writing, the UK distributors were preparing their own version, which promises to retain some but not all of the McDormand voiceover.

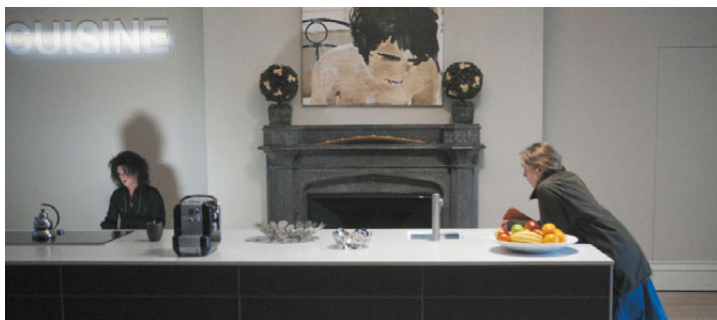
As ever, Sorrentino fills the frame with panache, making striking compositions from the terraced streets

**SYNOPSIS** Hong Kong, the present. CIA agents FDR and Tuck are supposed to apprehend criminal Heinrich in a covert operation. Instead they kill his brother, let Heinrich get away and as a result are indefinitely confined to their Los Angeles offices. Meanwhile, lonely consumer-products tester Lauren is signed up for an online dating service by best friend Trish. Tuck, who is separated from his wife and child, meets her on a blind date and the two hit it off. Unaware that Lauren is Tuck's date, FDR unsuccessfully hits on her at a video store afterwards. Undeterred, he shows up in a focus group and badgers her into agreeing to a date. After a rocky start, Lauren is charmed, and begins seeing both men.

Unaware that the two know each other, Lauren is unable to decide between them. FDR and Tuck assemble separate CIA teams to monitor the other and spy on Lauren. As their friendship deteriorates, they capture Heinrich's operative Ivan, who refuses to tell them anything about his boss. Lauren decides to have sex with FDR and Tuck to help her choose between them, but both men sabotage the other's date.

At a lunch date, Lauren is about to tell Tuck her decision when FDR shows up to warn his partner that Heinrich is following him. After the two men fight, Heinrich and his men kidnap Lauren and Trish. The duo rescue them. Heinrich is killed in a chase. Lauren chooses FDR. Tuck reconciles with his wife.





Space oddity: Sean Penn, Frances McDormand

overlooked by the curvy glass and steel of the recently rebuilt Lansdowne Road rugby stadium, but it's fair to say that thematically *This Must Be the Place* really only finds its feet once Cheyenne crosses the Atlantic... by ocean liner. It's after the funeral of his Holocaust survivor father that the script's big idea kicks in, sending Cheyenne off in search of the Nazi concentration-camp functionary whom the deceased had long since believed to be still alive and resident in the US. The notion of combining a former pop star with such subject-matter risks superficiality, but Sorrentino and Penn make the case that Cheyenne's childlike perceptions allow us to reconnect with the essential moral horror of these historical events.

In concert with David Byrne's live rendition of his title tune, its skewed

Norman Rockwell staging offsetting the song's oblique but affecting take on the succour of domesticity, the film gets an initial energy buzz from its encounter with the literal and figurative New World. The somewhat bland encounters that follow, however, show Sorrentino's efforts as writer lagging significantly behind his directorial eye for oddball locations and unexpected compositions, as the camera takes in giant whisky bottles and huge ceramic pistachios along the way. Ultimately, Sorrentino fluffs the central thrust of his film, but the incidentals are so captivating (not least a delightful anecdotal cameo from *Paris, Texas* icon Harry Dean Stanton), and Penn in such charming form, that there are pleasures indeed to take the edge off one's overriding disappointment. **◆ Trevor Johnston**

## CREDITS

### Produced by

Nicola Giuliano  
Andrea Occhipinti  
Francesca Cima  
Mario Spedaletti

### Screenplay

Paolo Sorrentino  
Umberto Contarello

### Story

Paolo Sorrentino

### Director of

Photography

Luca Bigazzi

### Editor

Cristiano Travaglioli

### Production Designer

Stefania Cella

### Music

David Byrne

### Lyrics

Will Oldham

### Sound Designer

Srdjan Kurpiel

### Costume Designer

Karen Patch

©Indigo Film, Lucky Red, Medusa Film, ARP,

France 2 Cinéma,  
Element Pictures

### Production

Companies

Nicola Giuliano, Andrea

Occhipinti, Francesca

Cima, Mario Spedaletti

present an Indigo Film,

Lucky Red, Medusa

Film production in co-

production with

ARP, France 2 Cinéma,

Element Pictures with

the participation of

Bord Scannán na

hÉireann/The Irish Film

Board

Developed with the

support of the MEDIA

Programme of the

European Union

With the support of

Eurimages

With the collaboration of

Canal+, CinéCinéma,

France Télévision

In association with

Intesa Sanpaolo

(participant in the Italian

Tax Credit Legislation)

and with the

participation of

Pathé

Produced with the

support of investment

incentives for the Irish

Film Industry provided

by the Government of

Ireland and of tax credits

provided by the States

of Michigan and New

Mexico

### Executive Producers

Ron Bozman

Viola Prestieri

### Film Extracts

*Twilight* (2008)

## CAST

Sean Penn

Cheyenne

Judd Hirsch

Mordecai Midler

Eve Hewson

Mary

Kerry Condon

Rachel

Harry Dean Stanton

Robert Plath

Joyce Van Patten

Dorothy Shore

David Byrne

himself

Olwen Fouéré

Mary's mother

Shea Whigham

Ernie Ray

Liron Levo

Richard

Heinz Lieven

Aloise Lange

Simon Delaney

Jeffrey

Frances McDormand

Jane

Dolby Digital/Datasat

Digital Sound

In Colour

2.35:1 [Super 35]

### Distributor

Trinity Filmed

Entertainment

# Tiny Furniture

USA 2010

Director: Lena Dunham

"I just got off the plane from Ohio, I'm in a postgraduate delirium!" complains Aura, the protagonist of *Tiny Furniture*, closely based on its writer-director Lena Dunham. The problem here is attention deficit disorder – Aura is not getting enough of it. Fresh back in New York after completing her degree at a smart Ohio arts college, Aura settles herself into the enviable SoHo loft of her family only to find her mother wrapped up in her work as a fine-art photographer and her sister indifferent to her postgrad existential blues, being too busy winning poetry prizes. The rest of *Tiny Furniture* plays out on this very small canvas: to get a job, or just not bother? To move out, or not move out?

You may already have a tiny violin out at this point, and with good reason. There are indicators that Dunham knows how excruciating her film's myopic focus on the problems of a few privileged neurotics is. Aura is, throughout, gently sent up (emphasis on the gently). There's the cinematography of Jody Lee Lipes (also credited on Sean Durkin's *Martha Marcy May Marlene*): shots lined up within a neutral grid, in what you might call International Arthouse Geometric, a style that can imply a certain critical distance or detachment from its subjects. There's the title too: *Tiny Furniture* referring to the doll-like set-ups Aura's artist mother photographs, but also implying full awareness of the miniature scale of Aura's problems. And, after all, didn't Jane Austen describe her writing as a miniaturist's art, worked upon "two inches wide of ivory"? Yes, but then something is always at stake in Austen: not just romantic love but social status and economic security. Nothing is at stake for Aura, who quits jobs out of boredom and has her work exhibited in Brooklyn art shows without lifting a finger. Dunham flags up Aura's narcissism but seems content that doing so lets her film off the hook.

The comedy is well observed but tends to be cute rather than acute:

taking its cue from the twee soundtrack, it indulges its characters. Without wishing to smash a cupcake with a hammer, even that miniature furniture metaphor is essentially borrowed – from Dunham's mother Laurie Simmons, here playing a very lightly fictionalised version of herself. The non-actors are in fact one of *Tiny Furniture*'s strengths: Dunham's sister Grace is also cast as a renamed version of herself and, like Simmons, is nuanced but unmannered. Their ease on screen makes up for an accomplished comic actor like Merritt Wever (*Nurse Jackie*) going to waste in a tiny role as Aura's college friend.

It's unfortunate for *Tiny Furniture* that it arrives in UK cinemas so soon after Kenneth Lonergan's *Margaret*, a far superior study of a narcissistic young girl living in Manhattan at close quarters with her mother, even if comparing two films of such hugely different budgets and production time isn't strictly fair. Dunham looks marked as one to watch, though: *Tiny Furniture* is part of the Criterion Collection, and she has a TV series in production with Judd Apatow. Maybe moving on to a larger canvas will help.

◆ Sam Davies

## CREDITS

### Produced by

Kyle Martin  
Alicia Van Couvering  
Written by

Lena Dunham

### Photographed by

Jody Lee Lipes

### Edited by

Lance Edmonds

### Art Director

Jade Healy

### Original Music

Teddy Banks

### Sound Recording

Micah Bloomberg

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## CAST

Lena Dunham

Aura

Grace Dunham

Nadine

Laurie Simmons

Siri

David Call

Keith

Alex Karpovsky

Jed

Jemima Kirke

Charlotte

Merritt Wever

Frankie

Rachel Howe

Candice

Amy Seimetz

Ashlynn

### In Colour

[2.35:1]

### Distributor

Independent

Distribution

**SYNOPSIS** Dublin, present day. Cheyenne, a once-famous American rock star who stopped performing after two fans committed suicide inspired by his songs, now shares a mansion with his firefighter wife Jane. He still wears makeup, and has a goth hairdo. He has befriended teenage fan Mary, whose brother Tony has unexpectedly left home – leaving their mother distraught. Cheyenne tries to console her, but is himself summoned to upstate New York, where his estranged father, a Holocaust survivor, has just died. Cheyenne discovers that his father had been obsessed with tracking down his tormentor from the camps, Aloise Lange, whom he believed was resident in the US. Mordecai Midler, famed hunter of Nazi war criminals, professes himself uninterested, so Cheyenne conducts the search for Lange himself. In Utah, he uncovers Lange's wife Dorothy by posing as one of her former high-school students. He follows the trail to the couple's daughter Rachel, whose young son takes to him, and thence to Lange's place in New Mexico. Now armed and ready to kill, Cheyenne finds only an empty house, but Midler is on hand to drive him into the desert, where Lange lives alone. Confronting the frail old man, Cheyenne learns that his father's obsession was born of a relatively minor humiliation, so he sends Lange outside naked instead of shooting him.

Cheyenne returns to Dublin, where his appearance in normal attire offers a consoling image of maturity and transformation to Mary's still-bereft mother.

**SYNOPSIS** Manhattan, the present. Aura, just graduated from a prestigious Midwest liberal arts college, returns home to live with her mother and teenage sister in their chic SoHo loft. Apart from making humorous exhibitionist YouTube videos, Aura is unsure what to do with her life, and has no plans other than to move out in the near future and share a place with college friend Frankie. At a party she meets old friend Charlotte and is introduced to Jed, in town for meetings with TV producers about his own YouTube sketches.

Aura drifts back into friendship with Charlotte. At home she struggles to get along with her sister (a precocious prize-winning poet) and mother (a successful fine-art photographer). Taking up a casual job at a local restaurant, she meets Keith, a chef. She begins seeing Jed. When her mother goes away and Jed needs somewhere to stay, Aura moves him into the family apartment, though their relationship remains platonic. On her return, Aura's mother demands that Jed find somewhere else to stay.

Despite arguing with her family, Aura finds life at home too comfortable to face moving out – though she only confesses this to Frankie when the latter is preparing to depart for New York. Aura visits a Brooklyn art show that's screening one of her YouTube videos; spotting Keith there, she realises that he's interested in her. Frankie arrives unexpectedly and confronts Aura about her decision not to move out of the family home. Keith and Aura meet and have sex but Aura realises that this is all he wants. She returns home, where her mother comforts her.



# Trishna

United Kingdom/  
Sweden/India 2011  
Director: Michael Winterbottom  
Certificate 15 113m 25s

*Trishna* marks Michael Winterbottom's third adaptation of Thomas Hardy, each time getting further from his source material – and not only geographically. *Jude* (1996), taken from *Jude the Obscure*, played it fairly straight, apart from using austere Edinburgh locations for Hardy's Christminster (read Oxford). *The Claim* (2000) transposed *The Mayor of Casterbridge* to Gold Rush-era northern California, and tinkered with the plot (especially the ending) to generally good effect. Now Winterbottom, who also scripted, has radically rejigged *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, setting it in modern-day India and telescoping two of the main characters into one. The relocation works well on the whole; the merger of characters doesn't.

In Hardy's novel *Tess* falls in love with the upright Angel Clare but is seduced (or raped, it's never quite clear which) by lecherous squire Alec D'Urberville. She has a child, which dies in infancy. She confesses this to Angel after their marriage, and he rejects her. When Alec tries to claim her again, she stabs him to death. More than one commentator has suggested that the censorious Angel and the predatory Alec can be seen as two halves of the same oppressive male character. Fine as literary criticism perhaps, but acting it out convincingly on film is a tougher proposition.

Winterbottom jettisons the dramatic tension of Hardy's love triangle. His script requires Jay (Riz Ahmed) to be both Angel and Alec – not simultaneously but sequentially. Initially tender, protective and affectionate (the love scenes between the couple while they're living together in Mumbai recall the carefree eroticism of *9 Songs*), Jay finds Trishna work in one of his father's hotels and then encourages her to advance her career. But he turns cold and remote when she confesses that she had an abortion – even though the child was his. He demotes her back to servant status, treats her callously and humiliates her with contemptuous anal sex. It would take an actor of considerable experience and subtlety to carry it off. Ahmed (*Shifty*, *Four Lions*) does his best by scowling a lot and thumbing through a paperback copy of the *Kama Sutra*, but it's never even remotely convincing.

Freida Pinto comes off better as Trishna, her gentle, vulnerable beauty well suited to the role of the submissive, lower-class country girl (not strictly lower-caste, as her family seem to be Christian). But even here her naivety sometimes feels overplayed: having lived with Jay in Mumbai and consorted with his bohemian friends, would she really acquiesce so meekly to being downgraded back to the role of a servant? And her eventual outbreak of savage violence, like Jay's change of character, comes across as



Wessex girl: Freida Pinto

unconvincing and inconsistent.

The film's most aptly cast character is India itself. Already in *A Mighty Heart* (2007) Winterbottom showed an acute eye for the turbulence and colour of the subcontinent, and with Marcel Zyskind once again as his cinematographer he takes us from the sun-raked Rajasthan countryside to the pullulating street

vitality of Jaipur and Mumbai without any sense of tourist condescension. Present-day India, a society in transition from rural to urban, where social rank can still confer near-feudal power, makes a good fit for Hardy's Wessex; it just seems a shame that an equally apt storyline has been wrenched arbitrarily out of shape. **Philip Kemp**

## CREDITS

**Produced by**  
Melissa Parmenter  
Michael Winterbottom  
**Screenplay**  
Michael Winterbottom  
Based on the novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy  
**Director of Photography**  
Marcel Zyskind  
**Editor**  
Mags Arnold  
**Production Designer**  
David Bryan  
**Original Score**  
Shigeru Umebayashi  
**Original Songs**  
Amit Trivedi  
**Sound Recordist**  
Will Whale  
**Costume Design**  
Niharika Khan

©The British Film Institute/Trishna Films Ltd.  
**Production Companies**  
Head Gear Films and UK Film Council present in association with Metrol Technology and VTR Media Investments a Revolution Films production in co-production with Bob Film Sweden and Film i Väst with support from Swedish Film Institute in association with Anurag Kashyap Films Made with the support of the UK Film Council's Film Fund  
**Executive Producers**  
Phil Hunt  
Compton Ross

Shail Shah  
Andrew Eaton

## CAST

**Freida Pinto**  
Trishna  
**Riz Ahmed**  
Jay  
**Roshan Seth**  
Mr Singh  
**Meeta Vasisht**  
Bhaanumathi  
**Harish Khanna**  
Vijay  
**Leela Madhauram**  
Devshri  
**Lakshman**  
Madhauram  
Lakshman  
**Pratiksha Singh**  
Pratiksha  
**Neet Mohan**  
Sandeep  
**Sam Hastings**

Sam  
**Marc Richardson**  
Marc  
**Anurag Kashyap**  
Anurag  
**Kalki Koechlin**  
Kalki  
**Amit Trivedi**  
Amit

**Dolby Digital**  
**In Colour**  
[2.35:1]  
**Part-subtitled**

**Distributor**  
Artificial Eye Film Company

10,207 ft + 8 frames

**SYNOPSIS** Present-day India. Twentysomething Jay, British-raised son of an Indian father and an English mother, is touring Rajasthan with three friends. They stop in a small town, where he sees 19-year-old Trishna performing a dance at their hotel, and talks to her. Early the next morning Trishna helps her father transport vegetables to market in a jeep; her father falls asleep at the wheel and collides with a truck. Trishna's arm is broken and her father sustains serious injuries. Leaving town with his friends, Jay finds out what has happened and offers Trishna a job at a hotel near Jaipur owned by his father. At the hotel, where Jay is living, Trishna becomes a waitress. Jay's father, who is blind, arrives from London and urges Jay to follow him into the hotel business. After his father leaves, Jay suggests Trishna take a course in hotel management. Returning from a friend's wedding party in Jaipur, she's hassled by two youths; Jay rescues her on his scooter. On the way back they stop in woods and make love. The next morning Trishna, overcome by shame, quits the hotel and returns home. When she discovers that she's pregnant, her father pressures her into having an abortion. Jay seeks Trishna out and takes her to live with him in Mumbai, where he's producing a film with friends. After some months of happiness together, he's summoned to London; his father has had a stroke. The night before he leaves, Trishna tells him about the abortion; he takes it badly. On his return he takes her to another of his father's hotels, but to avoid scandal tells her she must become an employee again. Each day she brings him lunch; his sexual treatment of her becomes increasingly harsh and degrading. One day she stabs him to death with a kitchen knife. She returns home to see her family, then goes to a lonely hilltop and stabs herself with the same knife.

# 21 Jump Street

USA 2012  
Directors: Phil Lord,  
Christopher Miller  
Certificate 15 109m 29s

Quite early on, this film apologises – ironically, of course – for even existing. Two hapless rookie cops (Channing Tatum and Jonah Hill) are told that they're being reassigned to 21 Jump Street. What's that, they ask. Oh, it's just some old outfit from the 1980s, they're told. It always was pretty bad but it's being revived because no one can be bothered to think of any fresh ideas...

You can probably relax at this point, unless you've accidentally wandered into your local multiplex looking for a piece of arthouse cinema. Feel free to chuckle into your popcorn while your eyeballs are washed with rookie-cop jokes, gross-out slapstick, high-school clichés and sub-frat-house booze-and-drugs gags. You may well have no recollection of the original 1980s TV series this is based on, except possibly as an early entry on Johnny Depp's IMDb page, but you already have all the references you need if you've seen *Animal House* and *Police Academy*. Even the comedy-remake shtick is comfortingly familiar: remember *Starsky & Hutch* 2004? Vaguely?

Still, there's enough disposable fun to be had in a script (co-written by Hill and Michael Bacall) that relishes every chance to prove it's not trying too hard. The so-called plot involves two hopeless cops working undercover in a high school, posing as students to find out the source of a deadly new hallucinogenic, and much is made of the ludicrousness of this scenario – there's a running joke about the fact that Jenko, played by thirtysomething Tatum, looks far too old to be at school. Hill gives his own character Schmidt (the insecure, fat, smart one) all the cute scenes and character development, as he falls in love and digs deep to find the self-belief needed to shoot a perp in the crotch. But Tatum (as the dumb jock) gets the funniest moments as he tries desperately to regain the alpha status he had when he was really at school, and fails miserably to understand that coolness has moved on. Ironically, in this oh-so-ironic film, Jenko is baffled by irony whenever he encounters it, and he's also given some ridiculously unlikely lines loaded with unintentional homoerotic overtones, which he completely fails to notice.

After that, people take drugs and do stupid things, there are car chases and shootouts, and there's a cameo by Johnny Depp, who pops up to demonstrate what real, unironic charisma looks like. Then, nothing else happens. You go home and forget about it.

**Lisa Mullen**



## CREDITS

### Produced by

Neal H. Moritz  
Stephen J. Cannell

### Screenplay

Michael Bacall

### Story

Michael Bacall

Jonah Hill

Based on the television series created by Patrick Hasburgh, Stephen J. Cannell

### Director of

Photography

Barry Peterson

### Editor

Joel Negron

### Production Designer

Peter Wenham

### Music

Mark Mothersbaugh

### Production Mixer

Pud Cusack

### Costume Designer

Leah Katznelson

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### Production Companies

Columbia Pictures and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Pictures present in association with Relativity Media an Original Film, SJC Studios production

### Executive Producers

Jonah Hill

Channing Tatum

Ezra Swerdlow

Tania Landau

## CAST

Jonah Hill

Schmidt

Channing Tatum

Jenko

Brie Larson

Molly Tracey

Dave Franco

Eric Molson

Rob Riggle

Mr Walters

DeRay Davis

Domingo

Ice Cube

Captain Dickson

Ellie Kemper

Ms Griggs

Chris Parnell

Mr Gordon

Caroline Aaron

Annie Schmidt

Dax Flame

Zack

Jake Johnson

Principal Dadier

Nick Offerman

Deputy Chief Hardy

Dolby Digital

In Colour

[2.35:1]

### Distributor

Sony Pictures Releasing

9,853 ft +8 frames



Wedding rings a bell: Channing Tatum, Rachel McAdams

# The Vow

USA 2012

Director: Michael Sucsy

Certificate 12A 103m 44s

'Inspired by true events', *The Vow* takes as its premise the real-life story of Kim and Krickitt Carpenter, a devout Christian couple who were forced to rebuild their relationship after a car accident in 1993 left Krickitt with retrograde amnesia.

The film reimagines the Carpenters as Leo (Channing Tatum) and Paige (Rachel McAdams), a young couple living blissfully bohemian lives as artists in downtown Chicago, and leaves aside the thorny issue of faith to focus on the much more saleable idea of a 'once in a lifetime love'. Struggling to make his wife fall in love with him for a second time, Leo faces resistance from Paige's upper-class parents (played with gusto by Jessica Lange and Sam Neill), her slippery ex-fiancé Jeremy (Scott Speedman), and most damningly from Paige herself, who is unwilling to confront the lost years.

Tatum and McAdams have a strong chemistry in the early sequences and flashbacks, which build a believable portrait of their relationship before the accident. The characterisation of Paige, however, wavers between unsympathetic and unrealistic – she spends most of the film as the blithely unlikeable woman she was before she met Leo, making her transformation and his desperation to win her back difficult to swallow.

The central performances are further undermined by an overwrought script,

which wears its years in development heavily and too often stomps into cliché (a scene in which Leo sits alone in his studio sadly strumming his guitar is particularly cloying). Sets feel overdressed – notably the couple's impossibly chic apartment and studio – while the dialogue is too polished, and altogether too safe, for a film trying so hard to be hip.

❖❖ **Chloe Roddick**

## CREDITS

### Produced by

Jonathan Glickman

Paul Taublieb

Gary Barber

Roger Birnbaum

### Screenplay

Abby Kohn

Marc Silverstein

Jason Katims

### Story

Dr Fishman

Jessica Lange

Rita Thornton

Jessica McNamee

Gwen

Tatiana Maslany

Lily

Joe Cobden

Jim

Lucas Bryant

Kyle

Joey Klein

Josh

Dolby Digital/DTS/

SDDS

In Colour

[2.35:1]

### Distributor

Sony Pictures Releasing

9,336 ft +0 frames

©Screen Gems, Inc. and Spyglass Entertainment Funding, LLC

### Production Companies

Screen Gems and

Spyglass Entertainment

present a

Birnbaum/Barber

production

### Executive Producers

J. Miles Dale

Austin Hearst

Susan Cooper

## CAST

Rachel McAdams

Paige

Channing Tatum

Leo

Sam Neill

Bill Thornton

Scott Speedman

Jeremy

Wendy Crewson

Dr Fishman

Jessica Lange

Rita Thornton

Jessica McNamee

Gwen

Tatiana Maslany

Lily

Joe Cobden

Jim

Lucas Bryant

Kyle

Joey Klein

Josh

Dolby Digital/DTS/

SDDS

In Colour

[2.35:1]

### Distributor

Sony Pictures Releasing

9,336 ft +0 frames

# We Bought a Zoo

USA 2011

Director: Cameron Crowe

Certificate PG 123m 43s

Comedy-drama meets family entertainment in Cameron Crowe's *We Bought a Zoo*, his first feature film since the much maligned 2005 *Elizabethtown*. Co-written by Crowe with Aline Brosh McKenna (*The Devil Wears Prada*), the script loosely adapts Benjamin Mee's memoir of the same title, relating how he and his family came to buy and live in a zoo on the south-west edge of Dartmoor. In the film adaptation, catering to an American audience, Dartmoor becomes fictional Rosemoor, somewhere in southern California: a lush if somewhat generic valley hemmed in by green hills. For an animal living in captivity, this is probably as good as it gets.

Night photography of illuminated houses and porches evokes Apichatpong Weerasethakul's *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives* (2010), especially with the background animal and bird noises that make the Californian valley sound like a jungle. And as in *Uncle Boonmee*, the grief-stricken protagonist (convincingly portrayed by Matt Damon) is haunted by the ghost of his dead wife, whose presence becomes more palpable as the film wears on, until she briefly appears in a strange but affecting scene in which the hero re-enacts for his two children his initial encounter with their mother. The only words we hear her say ("Why not?"), in reply to Benjamin's nervous chat-up line ("Why would a woman who looks like you ever talk to man like me?"), furnish him with a ready-made answer to Scarlett Johansson's head keeper Kelly when she asks him why he bought the zoo.

'Why Not?' is also one of the theme titles composed for the film by Icelandic vocalist and guitarist Jónsi of Sigur Rós, with whom the director previously collaborated on *Vanilla Sky* (2001). As befits a former rock critic, soundtracks are Crowe's strong suit, and *We Bought a Zoo*, with its handpicked pop classics complementing Jónsi's ethereal music and falsetto voice, doesn't disappoint in this respect. But the film could have done with tighter editing to make the slow-paced, studied dialogue punchier. What's more, the child/teen performances are uneven in a film that relies on them: Maggie Elizabeth Jones as Benjamin's wise-beyond-her-years daughter Rosie steals the show, but Colin Ford as angst-ridden Dylan wears a uniform expression that makes one long for the Dardenne brothers' *The Kid with a Bike* (2011). Elle Fanning, as Kelly's chirpy young cousin Lily, gets the sappiest line in a film where they're not exactly in short supply: "If you had to choose between people and animals, who would you pick?" On the strength of acting, with *We Bought a Zoo* one might be tempted to opt for the latter.

❖❖ **Agnieszka Gratzka**

**SYNOPSIS** US, present day. Jenko and Schmidt, old classmates, are both now rookie cops. Jenko is dumb, sporty and handsome; Schmidt is clever, fat and insecure. Incompetent and immature, they are dispatched to a special undercover unit housed in a disused church at 21 Jump Street, which is the base for undercover operations in local schools.

They are assigned a school where a deadly new designer drug is being sold. They are given fake identities but they forget their new names and have to swap roles, with Schmidt infiltrating the cool kids and Jenko making friends with the nerds. Schmidt discovers that the drugs are being dealt by cool kid Eric, and accidentally ingratiate himself with him by holding a party that turns into a riot.

Schmidt starts to fall for Eric's occasional girlfriend Molly. He and Jenko discover that the drugs are being distributed by a gang of bikers, who have seen them working as uniformed cops. A car chase leads to a fight between the two friends during a school production of *Peter Pan*, and they are both expelled. Undaunted, they turn up at the school prom anyway, and Eric leads them to the drugs' source: the obnoxious and embittered school sports coach. After a chase, Schmidt shoots the coach and they arrest him. They return to Jump Street as heroes.

**SYNOPSIS** Downtown Chicago, the present. Recently married Paige and Leo live happily in a studio apartment; she works as a successful sculptor and he runs his own recording studio. One night, as they are discussing the possibility of having children, their car is hit by a snow-plough. Leo escapes relatively unscathed but Paige suffers a serious head trauma which erases her memory of the past five years, including any recollection of their relationship.

Paige reverts to a younger version of herself in which she is still a law student, still on speaking terms with her rich, uptown parents and still engaged to high-powered businessman Jeremy. She moves back to the suburbs, falls in with her old crowd, changes her wardrobe to reflect her more conservative upbringing and returns to law school, leaving Leo struggling to recognise the woman he loves. He begins to court Paige from scratch with initially promising results, but ultimately finds her reluctant to confront some of the memories she has lost.

Paige finds out that her father had an affair with one of her school friends five years previously – this was the catalyst for her break with her family. She rediscovers her passion for art, moves back into the city and enrolls again at art college. She spurns Jeremy's renewed advances.

Some time later, Paige and Leo run into one another outside the café where they had their first date. They decide to go for a drink together.

## CREDITS

**Produced by**  
Julie Yorn  
Cameron Crowe  
Rick Yorn  
**Screenplay**  
Aline Brosh McKenna  
Cameron Crowe  
Based upon the book by  
Benjamin Mee  
**Director of  
Photography**  
Rodrigo Prieto  
**Film Editor**  
Mark Livolsi  
**Production Designer**  
Clay Griffith  
**Music**  
Jónsi  
**Production Sound  
Mixer**  
Jeff Wexler  
**Costume Designer**  
Deborah L. Scott

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Dune Entertainment III  
LLC (in all territories  
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Japan, Korea and Spain)  
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Company, Twentieth  
Century Fox Film  
Corporation and Dune  
Entertainment II LLC (in  
Brazil, Italy, Japan,  
Korea and Spain)  
**Production  
Companies**  
Twentieth Century Fox  
presents an LBI  
Entertainment/Vinyl  
Films production  
A Cameron Crow film  
Made in association  
with Dune  
Entertainment  
**Executive Producer**  
Ilona Herzberg  
**Film Extracts**  
*The Lone Wolf and His  
Lady* (1949)  
*The Third Man* (1949)

## CAST

**Matt Damon**  
Benjamin Mee  
**Scarlett Johansson**  
Kelly Foster  
**Thomas Haden  
Church**  
Duncan Mee  
**Patrick Fugit**  
Robin Jones  
**Colin Ford**  
Dylan Mee  
**Elle Fanning**  
Lily Miska  
**Maggie Elizabeth  
Jones**  
Rosie Mee  
**John Michael Higgins**  
Walter Ferris  
**Angus Macfadyen**  
Peter MacCready  
**Peter Riegert**  
Delbert McGinty  
**Stephanie Szostak**  
Katherine Mee  
**JB Smoove**  
Mr Stevens

**Dolby/SDDS  
In Colour  
Prints by  
DeLuxe  
[1.85:1]**

**Distribution**  
20th Century Fox  
International (UK)

11,134 ft +8 frames



**Gangland registry: Charlie Creed-Miles, Sammy Williams**

## Wild Bill

**United Kingdom 2011**  
**Director: Dexter Fletcher**  
**Certificate 15 98m 3s**

Another council estate, more drug dealers – it's business as usual in British cinema's low-budget sector. Given the done-to-death subject-matter, actor Dexter Fletcher's directorial debut faces an uphill battle to generate much enthusiasm, but at least there are some positives to report. For one thing, this saga of a former tearaway returning to East London to face up finally to being a father to his two sons at least works off a sturdy dramatic outline, as the erstwhile 'Wild Bill' strains to keep on the straight and narrow. There's plenty at stake too, since if Charlie Creed-Miles's eponymous protagonist messes up, the likelihood is that his youngest boy will follow dad's errant trajectory of gang activity and jail time, continuing the blight for another generation. It might not represent a landmark in originality, but the screenplay by Fletcher and Danny King offers conflicts and learning curves aplenty for family members who've never really been family, all within a context that combines domestic emotions and streetwise tension.

Well, that seems to be the theory at any rate. In practice, the clichéd villains drag everything down with them, resulting in a first feature that's more a matter of might-have-beens. As Eran Creevy's *Shifty* (2008) demonstrated with such aplomb, it is possible to put the dealers centre-stage and wring moral drama from exploring their humanity, yet here Leo Gregory's gang leader Terry and his unprepossessing cohorts are little more than functions of the plot, their geezery dialogue clearly struggling to bring anything distinctive to this element of the story. In effect, the ploddingly generic bad guys serve to undermine the good work elsewhere, since when Fletcher allows the family their own screen space rather than just

ticking off the plot points towards the final man's-gotta-do confrontation, the film proves surprisingly touching. Creed-Miles, long a stalwart second-line performer, really delivers in his big speech warning off his younger boy from following in dad's footsteps, and the moment when father and sons sit down to share a Chinese takeaway carries genuine emotional heft since we're made to understand that it isn't something this cash-strapped, half-broken household does every day.

Since it's exactly this kind of simplicity that gets us under the skin of believable everyday folks, it's a shame the formulaic plotting and, to a certain extent, a surfeit of overfamiliar faces in the margins (Olivia Williams as the parole officer, Jason Flemyng in child

protection, passing bobby Sean Pertwee, and an awful preening turn from Andy Serkis as a gangland Mr Big) rather work against immersive credibility. Still, Fletcher the former child actor seems to relish the opportunity to put the junior cast members centre stage, with Sammy Williams's vulnerable Jimmy outshining Will Poulter's slightly too shouty elder brother Dean. Elsewhere, intriguing soundtrack choices – including vintage soul from Aaron Neville and a moody Mark Hollis number which works deftly with Stuart Gazzard's slinky editing in the run-up to the climactic set-to – suggest a degree of ambition one hopes Fletcher gets closer to fulfilling next time round, provided he has a more convincing screenplay at his disposal. **♦♦ Trevor Johnston**

## CREDITS

**Producers**  
Sam Tromans  
Tim Cole  
**Writers**  
Danny King  
Dexter Fletcher  
**Director of  
Photography**  
George Richmond  
**Editor**  
Stuart Gazzard  
**Production Designer**  
Murray McKeown  
**Composer**  
Christian Henson  
**Sound Recordist**  
Giancarlo Dellapina

**Costume Designer**  
Matt Price  
  
©Wild Bill the Movie  
Limited  
**Production Company**  
A 20ten Media  
production  
**Executive Producers**  
Alan Jones  
Vicky Deigman

## CAST

**Charlie Creed-Miles**  
Wild Bill  
**Will Poulter**  
Dean  
**Liz White**  
Roxy

**Sammy Williams**  
Jimmy  
**Leo Gregory**  
Terry  
**Neil Maskell**  
Dickie  
**Iwan Rheon**  
Pill  
**Jaime Winstone**  
Helen  
**Charlotte Spencer**  
Steph  
**Jason Flemyng**  
John  
**Elly Fairman**  
Miss Treedley  
**Mark Monero**  
Freddy  
**Sean Pertwee**  
Jack

**Olivia Williams**  
Kelly  
**Andy Serkis**  
Glen

**Dolby Digital  
In Colour  
[2.35:1]**

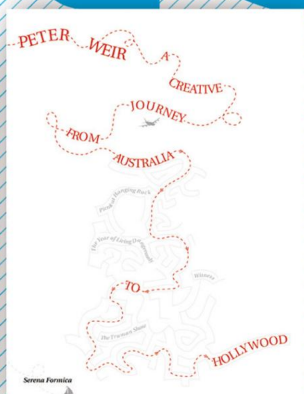
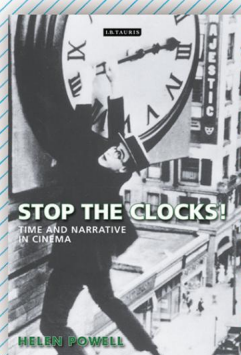
**Distributor**  
The Works UK  
Distribution Ltd

8,824 ft +8 frames

**SYNOPSIS** London, the present. Released after eight years in jail, Bill Hayward returns to Newham to discover that his ex-wife has left their two boys alone in the family council flat. Fifteen-year-old Dean is bending the rules to work on the Olympic stadium site, while 11-year-old Jimmy is vulnerable to bad influences. Bill plans to take a job on an oil rig, but Dean threatens to reveal that his dad is still in possession of drugs unless he stays and looks after them. Bill's old drug-dealing associates, now led by Terry, want him to return to the fold; unknown to Bill they are also trying to inveigle Jimmy into running deliveries for them. Panicked by a police patrol, Jimmy throws some coke down a grating and, threatened by an angry Terry, then steals money from Steph, a hairdresser involved in a blossoming romance with Dean. Bill gives Jimmy a fatherly talk about not following the same path to prison, and insists he apologise and return Steph's cash. Bill's burgeoning relationship with sometime prostitute Roxy is beginning to provide a stable home background, but Terry is angry at remaining out of pocket. Bill realises that he must stand up to the dealers to save his family, and in a set-to at the local pub he beats up Terry and most of his gang. He gains the respect of his boys as he's arrested to face a further jail sentence.



# Read



## Stop the Clocks! Time and Narrative in Cinema

By Helen Powell, I.B. Tauris, 192pp, paperback, £16.99, ISBN 9781848851757

*Stop the Clocks!* examines filmmakers' relationship to time and its visual manipulation and representation, from the birth of the medium to the digital present. It engages both with experimentation in narrative construction and with films that take time as their subject matter, such as *Donnie Darko*, *Interview with a Vampire*, *Lost Highway* and *Pulp Fiction*. Helen Powell asks what underpins the enduring appeal of the science-fiction genre with filmmakers and audience, and how cinematography might inform our conceptualisation of other imagined temporal worlds, including the afterlife.

[www.ibtaurisc.com](http://www.ibtaurisc.com)

## Peter Weir A Creative Journey from Australia to Hollywood

By Serena Formica, Intellect Books, 202pp, paperback, £15.95, ISBN 9781841504773

For the first time, Weir's entire three-decade creative journey from Australia to Hollywood is considered in light of recent theories on transnational cinema and through a close examination of four key films: *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, *The Year of Living Dangerously*, *Witness* and *The Truman Show*. The films' analyses integrate original interviews with Weir and his closest collaborators, including Russell Boyd. The book concludes that Weir is both an Australian and a Hollywood filmmaker – and would be better seen as a transnational filmmaker whose success in the US reflects the fact that he was already a 'Hollywood' director by the time he moved.

[www.intellectbooks.com](http://www.intellectbooks.com)

## 100 Ideas That Changed Film

By David Parkinson, Laurence King Publishing, 216pp, illustrated, paperback, £19.95, ISBN 9781856697934

This inspiring book chronicles the most influential ideas that have shaped film since its inception. Entertaining and intelligent, it provides a concise history as well as being a fascinating resource to dip into. Arranged in a broadly chronological order to show the development of film, it covers innovative concepts, technologies, techniques and movements. From the silent era's masterpieces to today's blockbusters and arthouse movies, these highly illustrated pages are a chance to discover or rediscover films from five continents. The milestones that have given Hollywood a hegemony over world cinema are discussed, but so too are subjects as diverse as German Expressionism, auteur theory and Third Cinema. Key ideas such as continuity editing, genre and sound are also fully explored.

[www.laurenceking.com](http://www.laurenceking.com)

## International Film Guide 2012: the definitive annual review of world cinema (48th edition)

Edited by Ian Haydn Smith, Cinephilia, 344pp, illustrated, paperback, £20, ISBN 9781908215017

First published in 1963, the *International Film Guide* enjoys an unrivalled reputation as the most authoritative source of information on contemporary world cinema. Comprehensive international coverage is offered via a 'World Survey' encompassing the output of over 90 countries, providing an overview of trends and changes in global cinema across the last 12 months. The guide also provides summaries of the major festivals and film markets around the world, while special features highlight major figures in the film industry, with profiles of Terrence Malick, Nicolas Winding Refn, Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, Terence Davies and Tomas Alfredson. Written by expert local correspondents, the *International Film Guide* is an invaluable resource for anyone interested in the state of contemporary cinema.

[info@cinephilia.co.uk](mailto:info@cinephilia.co.uk)

## Caché (Hidden)

By Catherine Wheatley, BFI Film Classics series, Palgrave Macmillan/BFI Publishing, 96pp, paperback, £10.99, ISBN 9781844573493

Ever since its world premiere at the Cannes Film Festival in May 2005, audiences have been talking about Michael Haneke's *Caché* (*Hidden*). The film's enigmatic and multilayered narrative leaves its viewers with many more questions than answers. Catherine Wheatley's study explores how – in depicting the relationship between an affluent Parisian family and the Algerian outsider Majid – the film raises questions about home and the family, France's 'hidden' post-colonial past, and the media and spectatorship. Wheatley's detailed analysis of its shifting perspectives opens up the multiplicity of meanings *Caché* contains, the better to understand its secrets.

[www.palgrave.com/bfi](http://www.palgrave.com/bfi)



# His satanic majesty

*Despite its orgies, abuses and excesses, 'The Devils' is one of Ken Russell's most controlled films, argues Kim Newman*

## The Devils

Ken Russell; UK 1972; BFI/Region 2 DVD; Certificate 18; 107 minutes; Aspect Ratio 2.35:1; Features: newly filmed introduction with Mark Kermode, audio commentary with Ken Russell, Mark Kermode, editor Michael Bradsell and Paul Joyce, 'Hell on Earth' (Paul Joyce, 2002), 'Director of Devils' (1971); on-set footage, NFT Q&A with Ken Russell in conversation with Mark Kermode in 2004, 'Amelia and the Angel' (Ken Russell, 1958), original UK and US trailers, illustrated booklet with essays by Craig Lapper of the BBFC and others

The first words heard in Ken Russell's 'The Devils' are: "His Majesty's triumphed again!" The majesty in question is Louis XIII, played by Graham Armitage as a proto-Frank N. Furter drag queen given to dressing up as Venus on the half-shell to be the camp centrepiece of his own theatrical presentations. In a later scene, as Cardinal Richelieu (Christopher Logue) hatches a wicked scheme, the king concentrates on potting Huguenots forced to put on crow costumes and run across his lawns in an atrocity staged as an entertainment and party game. With screaming archness, and unable to resist breaking the frame, Louis delivers an anachronistic punchline as yet another Protestant bleeds to death in his lake: "Bye-bye, blackbird."

Russell claimed this arose from authentic historical fact – Freddie Fox's performance in the same role in the recent 'The Three Musketeers' is scarcely less bizarre – though he wasn't above blurring more recent history in his reminiscences by characterising Armitage as "a leading transsexual", suggesting a Warholian pick-up rather than a character actor who had a long career (without noticeable gender realignment) in everything from 'The Dick Emery Show' to 'Kickboxer 5'. The majesty who has "done it again" is also Russell, mocking his public image as mad ringmaster, staging spectacles that yoke high culture (classical music, historical events) to Chaucerian bawdiness and brutality. The fawning also baits the critics, who would respond with far less unmitigated praise. Louis could have carping voices silenced, but Russell just had to slosh Alexander Walker about the head with a rolled-up newspaper on live TV – footage which sadly isn't among the extensive extras assembled for this BFI release of a film that's been hard to see in anything like its maker's original version since its (commercially successful – just to rub it in) 1971 release.

In 1632, Urbain Grandier, a worldly priest in the walled city of Loudun, was accused by Jeanne of the Angels, mother



Unholy disorder: Oliver Reed and Gemma Jones in 'The Devils'

## Russell sloshed Alexander Walker about the head with a rolled-up newspaper

superior of an Ursuline convent, of using sorcery to seduce her. This was followed by an outbreak of hysteria as more nuns heaped accusations on Grandier and exhibited the symptoms of demonic possession, though most commentators assume Grandier's eventual arrest, trials, torture and execution were at the behest of his powerful enemies in church and state, and that the accusations against him were baseless. In 1850 Alexandre Dumas wrote a play about the affair, and in 1952 Aldous Huxley addressed the subject in 'The Devils of Loudun', which – like Arthur Miller's 'The Crucible', based on the Salem witch trials – was an analysis of demonic hysteria cynically manipulated for political ends which had additional resonance in the era of McCarthyism. Huxley's book inspired John Whiting's stage play, the source for Russell's film, and an opera by Krzysztof Penderecki; meanwhile Jerzy Kawalerowicz's 1961 film 'Mother Joan of the Angels', which transfers the story to medieval Poland, concentrates on the later life of Jeanne, after Grandier's execution, and surprisingly doesn't dismiss out of hand the possibility that the priest was genuinely demonic.

It's just possible Warner Bros thought they'd get something like the Academy Award-festooned 'A Man for All Seasons' (also with Vanessa Redgrave, also based

on a play, also a historical religious-political-royal-courtroom drama winding up with a martyrdom) out of 'The Devils', a project they picked up after United Artists dropped it. But that suggests no one in the hierarchy bothered to see anything the director had made previously. The studio and (to a lesser extent) the censors deemed 'The Devils' a ghastly spectacle, which is pretty much what Russell wanted. In an introduction, Mark Kermode (who is all over the DVD extras) admits that this release is an interim measure, since Russell's preferred cut remains suppressed on studio orders. Even so, the DVD confirms the film's position as one of Russell's best (ironically, considering the orgies and abuses, it's one of his most focused, controlled works) while alluding to what's still missing.

The 'rape of Christ' sequence, cut from the UK and US versions in the 1970s, is glimpsed in snippets in Paul Joyce's documentary 'Hell on Earth' (2002), included in the extras, though that has been re-edited to remove even more of it. Also absent is a cameo from Spike Milligan, removed and replaced when Russell realised that although the comedian played his dramatic scene straight, audiences would laugh as soon as his goonish face popped up. Milligan's dialogue is given to Dudley Sutton, who – ironically – brings an air of comic menace to the dandy cynic in charge of Grandier's (and Loudun's) destruction and quite often gets laughs playing off the grim intensity of Oliver Reed, unusually cast as a sensualist who becomes an ascetic and genuine martyr through suffering.

## NEW RELEASES

### Chung Kuo – China

Michelangelo Antonioni; Italy 1972; Mr Bongo Films/Region O DVD; Certificate 12; 208 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.5:1

**Film:** Made for Italian television, Antonioni's documentary portrait of China (filmed in May 1972, when Mao Zedong was still alive and the Cultural Revolution a going concern) occupies a similar place in his filmography to that of *Phantom India* in Louis Malle's – and was similarly denounced by the host country after the director was deemed to have gone unacceptably off-message. The Chinese clearly wanted outright propaganda, which Antonioni was never likely to deliver (had his minders seen his earlier films?), though it's hardly the "vicious attack" or "wanton distortion and vilification" of repute.

Instead, it presents a wide range of material shot in Beijing, Shanghai, Suzhou and rural Henan province, covering massed crowds and domestic spaces, with a particular focus on assorted workplaces (the acupuncture caesarean is an early eye-opener), with Antonioni's matchless eye for passing detail much in evidence. The viewpoint is that of a highly intelligent European observer making a sincere if sometimes inescapably naive attempt to grasp the social structures of a country that at the time was almost entirely off-limits to westerners (to emphasise this, the commentary often mentions filming restrictions and the lack of concrete information provided by the guides).

Four decades later, the raw footage is as essential as Mitchell & Kenyon's studies of the Edwardian working classes, and for largely identical reasons – we're told that Shanghai has already profoundly changed in a single generation, but Antonioni's images are far closer to the Rome of *Bicycle Thieves* than today's *Blade Runner* metropolis.

**Disc:** Although the Super 16mm source means that a grainy picture is unavoidable, this very long film has been crammed on to one disc: splitting it over two would have ensured less visible evidence of digital compression. However, the strength of the content is such that visual blemishes are easy enough to tune out. (MB)

### The Conformist

Bernardo Bertolucci; Italy/France/West Germany 1970; Arrow Academy/Region 2 DVD & Region B Blu-ray Dual Format; Certificate 15; 112 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.66:1 (DVD anamorphic); Features: commentary, documentary, booklet

**Film:** It's hard to believe that Bertolucci, cinematographer Vittorio Storaro and designer Ferdinando Scarfioffi were all still shy of their 30th birthdays when they made this career-defining collaboration, as explosively virtuosic an exploration of the medium's possibilities as the similarly youthful *Citizen Kane* three decades earlier. But none of it would have worked without Jean-Louis Trintignant's title-role incarnation of the weaselly would-be assassin Marcello Clerici (a rivetingly risk-taking performance



which sometimes seems as closely modelled on the angles of fascist architecture as any of Scarfiotti's opulent sets) or the former Bresson 'model' Dominique Sanda, cast because she walked like a latterday Dietrich. **Disc:** The Storaro-supervised telecine from the original camera negative falls fractionally short of perfection (a patch of oversaturated colour here, a momentary 'jump' before a cut there), but it mostly looks eye-poppingly good, the Blu-ray being a substantial advance on the already solid Paramount DVD. David Forgacs's reputation as an outstanding commentator remains unsullied, especially when highlighting subtle but telling details that non-Italian viewers might miss. The retrospective Bertolucci career overview is a bit whistlestop, but has lots of rare interviews. The full-colour booklet showcases an essay by Michael Atkinson of this parish, an archive *S&S* interview, and Bertolucci's reflections on his film technique. All in all, it's a strong early contender for release of the year. (MB)

#### Dellamorte Dellamore

**Michele Soavi; Italy 1994; Shameless Screen Entertainment/Region 2 DVD; 103 minutes; Certificate 18; Aspect Ratio 1.67:1; Features: commentary track, photo gallery, booklet with essay by Alan Jones**

**Film:** "You're supposed to be setting a good example – now get back to your coffin immediately." This absurdist zombie movie from Michele Soavi – made after he emerged from the influential shadows of Joe D'Amato, Dario Argento and Terry Gilliam – has unusual comic and romantic streaks but suffers from a mixed-blessing Rupert Everett central performance and an attenuated storyline. It has a grasp of poetic, gruesome imagery, but a streak of misogyny undercuts its attempts at graveyard sweetness.

In an obscure cemetery, some of the dead are returning to half-life and nightwatchman Francesco Dellamorte (Everett) is charged with disposing of them in the approved George Romero manner by smashing or shooting their brains. The movie sets up this semi-surreal situation, then strikes out in another direction by following Dellamorte's obsessive love affair with a gorgeous young widow (Anna Falchi, whose overripe lips and nipples are fetishised by the camera), who seduces him on her husband's grave. She dies and revives to be killed by Dellamorte only to return again, as herself and a series of disposable, whorish lookalikes who further trample on Dellamorte's broken heart. Meanwhile Dellamorte's simple-minded assistant Gnaghi (François Hadji-Lazaro) has a relationship with the severed head of the mayor's daughter (the aptly named Fabiana Formica), and a zombie biker surges from the grave to cause trouble. In one-damn-thing-after-another fashion, Dellamorte is ordered by Death to stay away from the dead and become a killer only of the living. The non-sequitur finale features the literal edge of the world and puts its hero's



## Dracula Prince of Darkness It's not the best in the series, but it has lots of censor-upsetting blood and Christopher Lee resplendent as the Count

plight at an even further remove by making him a figure in a snow globe. **Disc:** Extras include an Italian-language commentary track with Soavi, focusing on how-this-shot-was-done, a photo gallery and a booklet with an essay of on-set reminiscences by British critic Alan Jones. (KN)

#### Dracula Prince of Darkness

**Terence Fisher; UK 1965; StudioCanal Home Entertainment/Region 2 DVD & Region B Blu-ray Dual Format; Certificate 15; 90 minutes; Aspect Ratio tbc; Features: commentary featuring Christopher Lee, Suzan Farmer, Francis Matthews and Barbara Shelley, 'World of Hammer' episode 'Hammer Stars: Christopher Lee', 'Back to Black' documentary, behind-the-scenes footage, trailer, double-bill trailer, original US titles, original print UK theatrical titles**

**Film:** Shocking as it may seem, given Christopher Lee's success as the bloodsucking Count of Hammer's *Dracula* in 1958, horror fans had to wait seven years for his return to the role for which he will always be remembered. Some other vampire spread terror across the land in the first Hammer sequel, *Brides of Dracula* (1960): Lee,

perhaps wary of typecasting, had not returned. He was eventually lured back, though, for *Dracula Prince of Darkness*, which began exactly where the original instalment had ended, with a reprise of the moments leading up to Dracula's earlier destruction.

Time had not stood still, though, and Lee may, perhaps, have regretted his decision. *Brides of Dracula* was expensive, and cost-cutting measures at Hammer were becoming evident – some charmingly wobbly props are made all the more visible now thanks to the clarity of this lovely new HD transfer. Creative wrangles saw Lee's Count without lines, communicating through expressive hisses. Lee remembers that the script wasn't up to par, so he wouldn't do it; scriptwriter Jimmy Sangster, conversely, claimed he simply didn't write Lee any dialogue. Either way, the film lacks the verve of its illustrious forerunner and, saddest of all, does not feature the splendidly upstanding Peter Cushing (surely the single most important ingredient in any Hammer horror). But it still has much to recommend it: lots of censor-upsetting blood, Lee resplendent as the Count, the marvellous Barbara Shelley, and ingenious budget-disguising direction from Terence Fisher.

It's not the best one in the series but who cares? Hovering somewhere on the fringes of eternity, like rubber bats on wires, these films thankfully seem as impervious to the ravages of time and critical opinion as the vampires they entomb. **Discs:** StudioCanal's Blu-ray, a crisp digital restoration in collaboration with Hammer, presents the film in its original aspect ratio, using a 2K scan from the original negatives. Extras include some fascinating on-set Super 8 footage, with comments from the cast. (VP)



Marching in step: 'The Conformist'

#### Films by Wojciech Jerzy Has

##### The Saragossa Manuscript

**Poland 1965; Mr Bongo Films/Region 0 DVD; Certificate 15; 175 minutes; Aspect Ratio 2.24:1 anamorphic**

##### The Hourglass Sanatorium

**Poland 1973; Mr Bongo Films/Region 0 DVD; Certificate 15; 119 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1 anamorphic**

**Films:** Reviewed in greater depth in *S&S* in May 2008 and January 2009, these are the most far-out cinematic trips that wayward Polish fabulist Wojciech Has has concocted over a four-decade career working in an industry more dedicated to promoting downbeat realism. The fact that both Luis Buñuel and Jerry Garcia were passionate fans of the labyrinthine narratives and surreal juxtapositions of *The Saragossa Manuscript* says it all, while its Bruno Schulz-derived successor *The Hourglass Sanatorium* is even more opulently strange, a floridly Wellesian journey through a junk-and-automata-strewn dreamworld haunted by the ghosts of Poland's multi-ethnic history as well as characters from its understandably bewildered protagonist's own past life. **Discs:** Released separately, and sourced from recent restorations hitherto only available on subtitled Polish DVDs, these improve very noticeably on Mr Bongo's earlier releases: the pictures are now rock-solid and blemish-free. The one quibble is that *The Hourglass Sanatorium* is framed at 1.85:1 instead of the theatrical 2.35:1, but this was at the request of its original cinematographer Witold Sobocinski, who supervised the restoration – and the compositions do indeed look fine, suggesting that this might have been the intention all along. (MB)

#### In a Glass Cage

**Agustí Villaronga; Spain 1987; Cult Epics/Region 1 NTSC DVD; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1; Features: new interviews with director, three shorts**

**Film:** A notoriously menacing international sensation when it was released, Agustí Villaronga's psychosexual morality play scans like a particularly bloodthirsty Almodóvar scenario, had Almodóvar ever swapped his ironic dash for full-on grand guignol. Certainly, the two directors shared the transgressive frisson of liberated Spanish filmmaking in the years after Franco's death, indulging in rampant taboo-assault.

In *a Glass Cage* is all about mustering offence and scalding the conservative viewer, and as with so many Spanish and Mexican narratives it's shaped like a closed maze, in which a family combusts like unstable chemicals in a sealed container. Added to the mix is the legacy of Nazi psychopathy, a dose of *Teorema* and an iron lung. The opening salvo has a Nazi in hiding, Klaus (Günter Meisner), resuming his wartime predilections by torturing and finally murdering a strung-up young boy; afterwards, saturated with self-loathing, he leaps off his manor roof. He's only crippled, however, and now suddenly



## NEW RELEASES

◀ a burden to his garishly repellent wife (Marisa Paredes), and trapped in the artificial respirator of the title.

Enter Angelo (David Sust), a strange and intense young man who soon insinuates himself into the house and becomes the helpless sadist's nurse; soon enough, Angelo's past intersects for us with Klaus's, and a conscientiously creepy course of sexually sickened and ultimately psychotic vengeance emerges.

Truth be told, Villarronga's movie is not quite the discomfiting shocker it was in 1987; we have been inured somewhat to the movie ideas of Nazi sadism and disabled-victim kink, which were the filmmaker's sharpest and most eagerly employed knives. (Villarronga has been busy since, with TV, shorts and harsh genre exercises like 1997's *99.9*, but never again anything as overtly nasty as his first feature.) But because *In a Glass Cage* exploited its nation's fascist hangover in a fiendishly pulpy way, it still resonates, and it's made with fabulous portentousness and icy glee.

**Discs:** Most fascinating here are Villarronga's three early, Jodorowsky-slash-Kenneth-Anger shorts, *Anta mujer* (1976), *Laberint* (1980) and *Al Mayurca* (1980), all of which seem to have bigger budgets, for extras and sets, than *In a Glass Cage*. (MA)

### Leon the Pig Farmer – The Kosher Edition

Vadim Jean and Gary Sinyor; UK 1992; Network Releasing/Region 2 DVD; Certificate 15; 99 minutes; Aspect Ratio 4:3; Features: directors' commentary, Gary Sinyor short 'The Unkindest Cut', trailer

**Film:** A surprise hit on its original release, this culture-clash comedy about a Jewish estate agent discovering that his natural father is a Yorkshire pig farmer remains amiable, but hasn't aged well. A dash of gentle absurdity, and nods to Woody Allen in Leon's neurotic parents and an *Annie Hall* comic chorus of nosy passers-by, help liven up the film's dawdling narrative. But the late Mark Frankel's engagingly deadpan Leon is overwhelmed by broad shtick from Janet Suzman's domineering mother and Brian Glover's proud farmer (who adopts Yiddish slang and chicken soup to acclimatise his new offspring). However, the film's obsession – and its ambivalence – about artificial insemination (there are cross-creed and cross-breed revelations, when Leon accidentally creates a sheep-pig) is a neat snapshot of early 1990s anxieties about family and fertility technology, for the cultural historians among you. **Discs:** Co-directors Vadim Jean and Gary Sinyor wisecrack their way through the commentary, cheerfully



Freeze frame: 'Liverpool'

admitting to cinematic pilfering ("This is my bit from *The Graduate*"). Sinyor's film-school short *The Unkindest Cut* is a dress rehearsal for the feature, and sometimes rather funnier. The transfers are passable if grainy, with colours slightly on the flat side. (KS)

### Letter Never Sent

Mikhail Kalatozov; Soviet Union 1959; Criterion/Region 0 NTSC DVD and Blu-Ray; 96 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.33:1; Features: essay by scholar Dina Iordanova

**Film:** The long-unavailable masterpiece from the pioneering plan-sequence godheads Mikhail Kalatozov and DP Sergei Urusevsky – the Beethoven's Second to the Ninth Symphony of their magnum opus *I Am Cuba* five years later – this stirring, eye-popping Soviet odyssey may already be the pivotal video rediscovery of 2012. With their unique arsenal of mobile camera, infrared stock, infinite range and deep compositions, the two filmmakers adapt Valeri Osipov's book about a four-person geological team (three men and Soviet New Wave goddess Tatiana Samojlova, a recipe for trouble) hunting for diamonds in Siberia. The elements turn against the starry-eyed team and – in the manner of so much state-beloved Soviet melo-prop – the narrative ends as a devastating salute not to heroism but to wholesale bad-luck martyrdom. (It'd be a morality tale or a *noir* anywhere else.) The tragedy of it is electrified by the film's visual assault and battery, which is shot almost 100 per cent on location, Flaherty-Herzog-style, but which nevertheless careens, starting with its first unearthly helicopter shot, from the Dantean to the ur-gothic to passages that are only Kalatozovian. The entire middle third of the picture entails an endless forest fire from which the team must escape, and instead of taking the safe and short route, with establishing shots abetted by detailed close-ups, Kalatozov films his characters in a series of stupefying tracking shots through the inferno, up close but always moving, in and out of the burning trees and cyclonic smoke clouds. How this sequence was managed out in the Siberian wilderness is anyone's guess – merely surviving the shoot appears to have been challenge

enough. (This is where a classic Criterion making-of mini-doc would seem imperative – but then again perhaps it's best not to know.)

Here, of course, is the primordial post-war spring from which came Tarkovsky, Jancsó and Sokurov, but one of the differences is that Kalatozov is *fast* – his roving, monumental orchestrations move at a harried gallop. *Letter Never Sent* represents a large puzzle piece from Kalatozov's attenuated career, which began with documentaries in the late 1920s but only came to a head decades later, with the 1957 hit *The Cranes Are Flying*. All the while, apparently, the filmmaker was rarely allowed to fashion anything that wasn't straight-up agitprop; the four films he made with Urusevsky (including 1957's *Pervyy eshelon*) are remarkable for how they galvanise even the systemised sentimentality of Soviet propaganda with unique and unalloyed formal pyrotechnics. If this isn't pure cinema – plastic masterfulness that renders its formulaic materials not even moot but beautiful – there may not be such a thing.

**Disc:** Breathtaking. Strangely, for a film that could use contextual exegesis, there is only Dina Iordanova's essay, which maintains, among other things, that Kalatozov and Urusevsky had charges of 'formal indulgence' levelled at them by the time *I Am Cuba* was finished – hence, perhaps, the team's subsequent dissolution. (MA)

### Liverpool

Lisandro Alonso; Argentina 2008; Second Run/Region 0 DVD; Certificate PG; 82 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.78:1 anamorphic; Features: short film 'Untitled (Letter for Serra)'; interview, booklet

**Film:** A merchant seaman applies for two days' shore leave and travels to a tiny village in snowbound Tierra del Fuego, ostensibly to visit his mother for the first time in decades. The wispieness of this structural hook makes it clear that director Lisandro Alonso's cinematic interests lie elsewhere – and these duly reveal themselves through a series of slowly paced, immaculately composed shots (unless mounted on a vehicle, the camera rarely moves) which imbue even material as

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outwardly banal as the preparation for a journey with inexplicable philosophical weight. And just when the film seems set on continuing the same leisurely course to the end, Alonso pulls off an unexpected narrative coup, triggering immediate re-evaluation of the film's entire subject. **Disc:** Alonso has been badly served on DVD in the past, but this director-approved anamorphic transfer is flawless. The elliptical supporting short *Untitled (Letter for Serra)*, an exclusive interview and a wide-ranging booklet by *S&S* contributor David Jenkins round off a very satisfying package. (MB)

### La Morte Rouge

Victor Erice; Spain 2006; Rosebud/Fnac/Region 2 DVD; 34 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.33:1; Features: short film 'Alumbramiento'; interview, production short, deleted scene, reviews

**Film:** An extremely welcome DVD release for Erice's brief but brilliant autobiographical essay, hitherto seen only at the Erice-Kiarostami 'Correspondences' exhibition a few years ago. Though inexpensively made and modestly labelled in the opening credits as a soliloquy (there's no dialogue, only Erice's narration, music and sound effects), *La Morte Rouge* is as rewarding as anything the famously far from prolific writer-director has made to date – a remarkable achievement given the standard of his work.

The title refers to the setting of the first film he ever saw – Roy William Neill's *The Scarlet Claw*, starring Basil Rathbone as Sherlock Holmes – when taken by his older sister to San Sebastián's now long-demolished Kursaal; as a five-year-old he was astonished not only that the Québécois village of La Morte Rouge didn't appear on any map, but also that the adults in the audience seemed in no way upset by the sight of the corpses on screen. (The boy's epiphany took place after years of war in Spain and Europe.)

Deploying photographs, documentary and archive footage, dramatic reconstruction and – for once very fittingly – the music of Arvo Pärt, Erice creates a wonderfully dense, perceptive meditation on the connections between cinema and history, imagination and memory, time and place, childhood and death. For all its political, poetic and philosophical resonance, what's perhaps most impressive about the film is its delicacy of tone; characteristically, the gently elegiac mood doesn't preclude a warm, wry sense of humour. Both artistically and intellectually, it's one of the most satisfying European films of recent years.

**Disc:** The main attraction's brevity (which certainly doesn't make for paucity of content) is more than compensated for by the extras, which include a long interview with the uncommonly articulate Erice and his memorably superb contribution to *Ten Minutes Older: The Trumpet* (2002), a vignette set in 1940 that perfectly complements *La Morte Rouge*. (GA)

# Down on the street

Nick Bradshaw revisits Lionel Rogosin's *'On the Bowery'*, a pioneering drama-doc shot on the mean streets of New York

### On the Bowery/Good Times, Wonderful Times

Lionel Rogosin; US 1956/64; Milestone/Region-free Blu-ray; 65/69 minutes; Aspect Ratio 4:3; Features: introduction by Michael Scorsese, 'The Perfect Team: The Making of On the Bowery', 'A Walk Through the Bowery', 'Street of Forgotten Men' (1933), 'Bowery Men's Shelter' (1972), 'Man's Peril: The Making of Good Times, Wonderful Times', 'Out' (1957)

The greatness of Lionel Rogosin's 1956 *'On the Bowery'*, a stark, intimate and vital portrait of homeless drunks on New York's skid row, has long been one of cinema's open secrets. The first American film to win the Grand Prize for Documentary at the Venice Film Festival, it also garnered a Bafta Flaherty Documentary award and was nominated for an Oscar. Inspired by Robert Flaherty's ethnographic forays, the Italian neorealists and – as its director would insist – "by life", Rogosin's semi-performed, minimally dramatised documentation of real people in their actual environments formed a key plank of the New York-centred 'New American Cinema', dovetailing with the experiments of Sidney Meyers, Morris Engel, Shirley Clarke and John Cassavetes and thus helping sire the American indie movement as well as inspiring Jean Rouch and the nouvelle vague.

Yet the film opened to dismissive reviews ("a dismal exposition to be charging people money to see... merely a good montage of good photographs of drunks and bums, scrutinized and listened to ad nauseam," wrote Bosley Crowther in *The New York Times*), was allegedly repressed abroad by the US State Department, and it's fair to say has remained under the carpet ever since. Milestone's Blu-ray release – mastered from a restoration by the Cineteca del Comune di Bologna and the first half of a planned two-volume collection of Rogosin's work – is the film's first issue on home video in 25 years (outside France).

Looking the other way is, of course, the tendency 'On the Bowery' countermands from its opening frames – expository shots of a neighbourhood in the physical and historical shadow of Manhattan's old Third Avenue elevated rail line, the streets below littered with the idle bodies of men who typically, we learn, once worked the railroad. While police busy themselves impounding public-bench sleepers and other undesirables, DP Richard Bagley records them in gutters, in (typically bar)



Skid row: 'On the Bowery'

doorways, even reclining in a cart with a copy of *Esquire*. The camera follows a new arrival – the craggily handsome Ray Salyer, whom Rogosin met fresh to the Bowery after a weekend's bender – through three days on and off the wagon, his lingering faith in temperance and gainful employment contrasted with that of Bowery lifer Gorman Hendricks, per the storyline a barely glad-hander who comes to seem both angel and devil on Ray's shoulders. (Offscreen, Hendricks put his death-spin drinking on hold just long enough to complete the shoot.)

Ray is the focus of a couple of long, telling set pieces in the bread-and-bed queue of the Bowery Mission and later, when his patience with its Hadean claustrophobia snaps, in a long night's bar orgy that you'd be hard pressed to call staged. (Documenting drunks would seem to have the upside of facilitating the subjects' on-camera artlessness, though the collaboration with them seems to have spurred Bagley to an early boozy grave too.) The plotline lends the film a depth of characterisation and soul, but Rogosin is careful never to narrow his angle; in bars and on the street, the film inscribes, in crisp, luminous monochrome and sometimes less lucid sound, the bacchanalian faces and voices of an entire demimonde. Rogosin talked of making a film "close to painting and sculpture"; in a making-of on this set, the scholar Ray Carney cites the Rembrandts on the director's New York apartment walls as a model for the photography.

Rogosin's solidarity with these down-and-outs may partly have derived from the WWII naval service he shared with many of them; more likely it was innate. The son of an émigré New York textile tycoon, he quit his father's business to take aim at the worldly maladies he'd seen in the war: "We just came through

the Holocaust, which was insane. Something's wrong. I have to find out – with my camera." *'On the Bowery'* was intended as a trial run for his smuggled 1959 apartheid exposé *'Come Back Africa'*, which will presumably headline Milestone's second Rogosin set. This volume's extras include the aforementioned plain-but-useful making-of, a Martin Scorsese introduction, three shorts depicting the Bowery in 1933 (*'Street of Forgotten Men'*), 1972 (*'Bowery Men's Shelter'*) and now, and two other Rogosin films.

*'Out'* (1957), a melancholic 25-minute portrait of refugees from Hungary's crushed 1956 revolution, supervised by Thorold Dickinson for the United Nations Department of Public Information, shares with *'On the Bowery'* a palpable sense of unwillingly idle masses stuck in time (and likewise asks us to share their inertia, withholding much of their backstories to the end).

Swapping sympathy for satire, and subtlety for primal scream, Rogosin's third feature *'Good Times, Wonderful Times'* (1964) watches the booze flow once more at a horrendous Swinging London cocktail party whose braying, shallow and occasionally charming guests – culled mostly from ad land, according to its editor Brian Smedley-Aston – vent varieties of smug prejudice about the virtues of war, while Rogosin intercuts extended scenes of horror from WWI, the Warsaw Ghetto, the Eastern Front and Hiroshima, as well as anti-war protests in Japan, Washington and Aldermaston. Watching it, you pine for the poetry of 'Hiroshima mon amour' or 'Simon of the Desert' and suspect that, without certain constraints, Rogosin would have mercilessly continued adding scenes ad infinitum. But that may be the point.



# Emotional train wreck

**Tim Lucas** on a Roeg-Potter collaboration brought to life by Gary Oldman's exciting, unpredictable performance

## Track 29

Nicolas Roeg; US/UK 1987; Image Entertainment/Region 1 DVD; 90 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.78:1

Based on a script by Dennis Potter, 'Track 29' takes its title from the hit song 'Chattanooga Choo Choo', originally performed by Glenn Miller and His Orchestra in the 1941 musical 'Sun Valley Serenade'. It is useful to know, while watching Nicolas Roeg's film, that the song was awash in nostalgia even at the time it was recorded, detailing an old-fashioned ride from North to South aboard a woodburning steam locomotive, just as the United States was gearing up to join the war against Germany. It's model trains that chug along the surface of this film, the happy preoccupation of suburban doctor Henry Henry (Christopher Lloyd), but they're more than just a hobby – they offer a masculine parallel to the dolls collected by his wife Linda (Theresa Russell), the surface ripple of a psychological problem that runs much deeper. These compulsive acquisitions are Linda's plastic compensation for the real child she once gave away, and her deeply internalised regret explains the film's concern with nostalgia and escapism, though her ultimate escape fantasy brings her face to face with what she's lived her whole adult life suppressing.

Roeg and Potter sound like an ideal marriage on paper. There's never just one thing going on in a Roeg film, nor in a Potter script; both artists liked to find new stories and mine greater depths in those areas where genres collide, like the detective story and the musical ('The Singing Detective', 'Performance'), or in those hazy areas where loving deeds blur with acts of hate ('Brimstone and Treacle', 'Bad Timing'), or where fiction becomes metafictional by sussing out the secret relationships between unrelated works of art. Potter was noted for having actors mime to records from other periods, and having the same actor essay two different roles in a play; Roeg's films are likewise rife with doubles, and he frequently uses clips from unrelated films to point out thematic resonances in the work at hand ('The Third Man' in 'The Man Who Fell to Earth', for example). 'Track 29' opens with Gary Oldman's character hitchhiking in front of a sign that reads 'Cape Fear River', and we're off and running.

Bearing some surface similarities to Potter's earlier 'Brimstone and Treacle', this is another home-invasion story about dreams and relationships gone wrong (a point perhaps slyly made at the outset



Pottermania: Theresa Russell and Gary Oldman in 'Track 29'

when the logo of George Harrison's Handmade Films is followed by titles scored with John Lennon's 'Mother' – not the original recording on the Apple label, but a soundalike rerecording from God-knows-where). 'Track 29' has its origin, like most of Potter's screenplays, in an earlier teleplay: his 1974 'Play for Today' production 'Schmoedipus', in which an unstable young man (Tim Curry) approaches an unhappy London housewife (Anna Cropper) as her adult illegitimate son, the product of a rape, given up for adoption when she was still a teenager.

Roeg's film transplants the story (probably to get it made) to Wilmington, North Carolina – home of the shortlived Dino De Laurentiis Studios – where Dr and Mrs Henry live separate fantasy lives in a new housing development, with Henry conducting a kinky office affair with a rubber-gloved nurse (Sandra Bernhard) while Linda's aching womb recalls a teenage rape and the child she gave away – to the point of conjuring up an irascible young Briton named Martin (Gary Oldman), adult but childlike in all the worst ways, who embodies her confused desires for both a child and a lover. "Do you not remember the tug of my lips on your tender young breast?" he asks, his pouty pucker within inches of recreating the primal scene – and she still invites him inside. In fact, Martin is inside; no one else can see him – that is, except for the idea of Martin echoing from a television broadcast of Robert Mitchum sexually terrorising Polly Bergen in scenes from 'Cape Fear'.

Fresh from playing Sid Vicious and Joe Orton, Gary Oldman gives the hungriest performance here. He's such a vital,

**Roeg and Potter sound like an ideal marriage. There's never just one thing going on in a Roeg film, nor in a Potter script**

unpredictable, exciting presence that it's never a problem that his English accent has no logical explanation in his mother's past or psyche. But the film must stand or fall on Theresa Russell's performance (her fifth and penultimate one for then-husband Roeg), and it falls like an expertly constructed house of cards. All the window dressing for Linda's imprisonment in her past is in place – she watches cartoons all day, wears braces, lives in a suburban dollhouse with dozens of dolls – but Russell chooses to play Linda with a grating, unconvincing Southern accent, needless since her husband has none, and though it has a logical explanation given her North Carolina address, her performance can't sell it. Christopher Lloyd, stereotyped as eccentric from 'Taxi' and 'Back to the Future', overplays as if by rote a character whose arc might have seemed profound if reined in a bit, culminating in a Reagan-esque speech to an audience at a model-train convention where he describes their common hobby as "a picture of long ago, when we knew who we were, what we were, and where we were going". Lines like this indicate a film written as an indictment of a society avoiding its adult responsibilities on the world stage by regressing into a 1940s dream of itself, a war-bound history from which America should have learned, but Roeg plays it in Linda's cartoon terms, stocking it with caricatures rather than characters, so eccentric in look and manner that we feel repulsed by them before they can do anything to repulse us. Unusually, Roeg also indulges himself in bits of self-reference, hanging posters of George Harrison and David Bowie on the teenage Linda's bedroom wall.

Image Entertainment presents the film in a nice-looking DD 2.0 transfer in its correct aspect ratio and projection speed, which may tempt some collectors who acquired Optimum's 2010 DVD release, and certainly those who bought the older Dutch Region 2 issue, which cropped the image to 1.33:1. Contrary to online reports, Image hasn't released this title on Blu-ray.

## Moses and Aaron

Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet; Germany 1975; New Yorker/Region 1 NTSC DVD; Aspect Ratio 1.33:1; Features: full libretto of Schoenberg opera in German and English, essays, Straub and Huillet's 1973 short 'Introduction to Arnold Schoenberg's Accompaniment to a Cinematographic Scene'

**Film:** The most recalcitrant and inventively severe of filmed operas, this otherwise uncategorisable legend from the stringent and underexposed husband-and-wife team is both a minimalist rendition of Schoenberg and the story of Exodus, and a reinvention of it, in which the crucial essence of the 12-tone music, the thematic thrust within the story and the tension inherent in our participation as viewers are all placed in counterpoint to each other, in the leanest formal way possible. Bresson is, again, a looming corollary; this operatic production has no acting, just the players' presence in the desert (shot mostly in Italy and Israel), singing in atonal wails, Moses and Aaron facing the Chorus or the Elders, as the camera chooses its positions and movements for solely, and sometimes arcanelly, philosophical reasons. The first 11-minute scene, for instance – Moses's conversation with the Burning Bush (sung by members of the Chorus, off screen) – is comprised of just two shots: first, of the back and side of Moses's head as he argues with the Voice of God, and then the Straubs cut to the sky and hills, slowly revolving the camera 360 degrees as Schoenberg's creepy, desperate, harrowing scales rise and fall, intimating a sense of unnerving, cosmic crisis that no other rendition of Exodus has ever produced.

In his excerpted *Film Comment* essay, Allen Shawn calls the Straubs' strategy "radical non-interference" – but leaving Schoenberg well enough alone is not the same as putting his most controversial opera on film, even in such stripped-down form. Certainly, the film's primal fascination comes from the dialectic between the demands of the story, including the Golden Calf debauchery of the Jews in Moses's absence, and the Straubs' daring visual choices, which pare things down to figures in a landscape, and which are concertedly focused on what isn't shown more than what is. This makes the Schoenberg tale resonate further, as it pits Moses's adherence to the Word and its idea against Aaron's more earthly reliance on image and miracle, the purity of one against the corruptible power of the other. Like Bresson, the Straubs were slouching towards revelation without straining towards depiction.

**Disc:** As is true with Straub-Huillet across the board, accompanying texts are always necessary, and so the reprinting of Schoenberg's entire libretto in the DVD booklet is substantially helpful, as is Shawn's critical essay and the Straubs' Schoenberg short, made apparently as a research for, and preamble to, the feature to come. (MA)



## Outcast of the Islands

Carol Reed; UK 1951; StudioCanal/  
Region 2 DVD; Certificate PG; 95 minutes;  
Aspect Ratio 1.33:1

**Film:** Unpopular on its release (it had the thankless task of following *The Fallen Idol* and *The Third Man* in Reed's oeuvre) and largely forgotten since, this thoughtful adaptation of Joseph Conrad's novel badly needs rediscovering. A colonial tragedy, shot through with high melodrama and thriller elements, it's a tale of how a corrupt trader's greed and lust destroy a Malayan outpost, moving impressively if unevenly between epic themes and intimate betrayals. Trevor Howard's posturing, cocksure Willems is one of his finest performances, an antihero visibly consumed by his need for native girl Aissa and his own ripe self-loathing. Opposite him, Ralph Richardson is whiskery and a tad declamatory as his adopted father Lingard, in keeping with Reed's use in that era of a more theatrical performance style. But there are jolts of pure cinema too, when the forbidden lovers tryst among the shadowy stilts of a river longhouse, or when Robert Morley's yowling administrator is swung through a campfire like a portly piñata by invading natives.

**Disc:** An impressive, delicately detailed transfer, which does full justice to cinematographer John Wilcox's sweat-stained cinematography. It's a barebones release without contextualising commentary, so best watched with Peter William Evans's excellent 2005 study of Reed's work to hand. (KS)

## Rare Films by Raúl Ruiz

### The Territory

Portugal/US 1981; Clap Films/Region 0;  
104 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.33:1

### La Ville des pirates

France/Portugal 1983; Clap Films/  
Region 0; 108 minutes; Aspect Ratio  
1.33:1; Features: interviews with Raúl Ruiz,  
Melvil Poupaud, commentary on opening  
scenes by Frédéric Bonnaud

### Point de fuite

Portugal 1984; Clap Films/Region 0;  
77 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.33:1

### Combat d'amour en songe

France/Portugal 2000; Clap Films/  
Region 0; 122 minutes; Aspect Ratio  
1.66:1; Features: interview with Raúl Ruiz

**Films:** Of more than a hundred features completed by the Chilean exile Raúl Ruiz, only around ten have so far



## Three Outlaw Samurai Gosha Hideo's film is a vital milestone in samurai cinema, easily as beloved on its home turf as the early 1960s hits of Kurosawa

surfaced on DVD from various sources, making this special set of films made in Portugal of great value. All these titles were produced by the maverick Paolo Branco, a key supporter of Ruiz right to the end of his career, when his Proust adaptation *Time Regained* and the final *Mysteries of Lisbon* gave him a wider audience than ever before. This collection highlights the vital support Branco gave Ruiz in making films on small budgets and with international casts, but always in a spirit of high invention and conceptual sophistication.

Whether these films will give pleasure is, of course, always an open question with Ruiz. There is never any pretence to audience identification or psychological realism. His cinema breaks all the narrative rules – stories are dealt to the audience like the chance juxtapositions in a game of cards, often spiralling out of the characters' control and without any recourse to a traditional structure (as Ruiz explains in the accompanying interviews, many of the scripts were adapted as shooting progressed). The more immediate rewards come from Ruiz's undeniable visual inventiveness – the films are bursting with bizarre images and dynamic compositions, and not for nothing has his work been compared to that of Orson Welles in its gypsy-like opportunism and aesthetic energy.

*The Territory* was inspired by the 1972 Andes plane crash that led to its survivors resorting to cannibalism, which is exactly

what befalls Ruiz's motley group of individuals who become lost during a trek through an unforgiving forest. Although his name is mysteriously absent in the credits, the script was the work of the late Gilbert Adair (who would go on to work with Ruiz on the dialogue for *Klimt* and an adaptation of his own novel *A Closed Book*). The stilted delivery of the English dialogue doesn't help in sustaining the atmosphere, but what is still haunting is the stunning colour photography of the great Henri Alekan. *The Territory* was little seen (in spite of distant funding by another absent name, Roger Corman, no less) but Wim Wenders famously took over most of the cast, crew and the Portuguese location to make *The State of Things* (1982).

*La Ville des pirates* shows greater inspiration, with Ruiz making the most of a project abandoned when the literary rights proved unavailable but he still had a cast and crew to hand. Taking as his starting point the legends surrounding the real Brotherhood of Pirates, a 17th-century mason-like community whose number included Francis Drake, Ruiz placed a set of contemporary characters in an increasingly fantastic tale. Isidore (Anne Alvaro) escapes servitude in a household to flee to an island in search of her son, who may or may not be the young boy (a devilishly angelic Melvil Poupaud) who follows her every move and leaves a trail of murders behind him. She is taken prisoner by a Norman Bates-like man (Hugues Quester) whose multiple personalities become his downfall. Just as any plot element (such as lifts from *Peter Pan*) seems to solidify, Ruiz introduces further twists and reversals, so that the narrative never achieves any resolution. What's truly beguiling is the use of a whole range of in-camera trickery (heavy filters, reverse motion, deep focus), with objects often placed in disconcerting proximity to the lens and even an astounding shot from inside a character's mouth.

*Point de fuite*, using some of the same team, is a more 'conventional' film, shot

a little like a classic 1940s *film noir*, with a selection of disenfranchised characters telling stories and playing out arcane rituals. It's a very minor work compared to the last film in the collection, *Combat d'amour en songe* (*Love Torn in a Dream*), which finds a now adult Melvil Poupaud as a priest questioning his faith, lost in a labyrinth of nine basic stories outlined in a self-reflexive prologue. These include pirates (again), nuns indulging in erotic fantasies, paintings and mirrors that are as alive as those who look at them, and so forth. Obviously more sophisticated from the point of view of performances (Lambert Wilson and Marie-France Pisier are among the cast) and production values than its predecessors, the film never quite delivers what it promises – but then for Ruiz, that's probably the whole idea.

**Discs:** Decent transfers, but it's clear the original elements of the 1980s titles are not in the best state (and *Point de fuite* is taken from a worn French subtitled print). In an edition made for the English-, French- and Portuguese-speaking markets, the subtitles are generally good. Interesting extras, but more information would have been helpful given the challenges presented to the uninitiated. (DT)

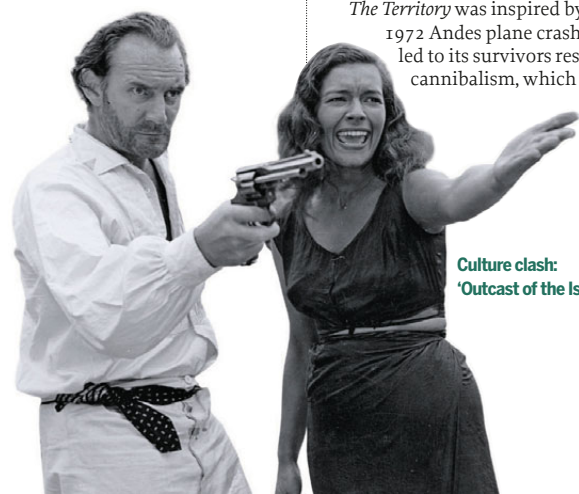
## Three Outlaw Samurai

Gosha Hideo; Japan 1964; Criterion/  
Region 0 NTSC DVD and Blu-Ray;  
93 minutes; Aspect Ratio 2.35:1;

Features: essay by critic Bilge Ebiri, trailer

**Film:** Easy to overlook even if you were simply to consider the rush of world-beater Japanese films released in 1964 (*Woman in the Dunes*, *Kwaidan*, *Onibaba*, *Intentions of Murder*, *Pale Flower*, *Manji*, *Gate of Flesh* etc), Gosha's *chambara* saga is in fact a vital milestone in samurai cinema, easily as beloved on its home turf as the early 1960s hits of Kurosawa. More a dedicated pulpmeister than a member of the New Wave, Gosha began as a TV director, and *Three Outlaw Samurai* was, in fact, a big-screen adaptation of his hit show of the same title, which was in its third original season when the film came out and would plough on for three more years. You'd never know it – Gosha's is a widescreen eye, and this, his first feature, is a Shochiku GrandScope flood of muscular compositions, torrential movement, dramatic depth and some of the most detailed lighting ever expended on a genre film, even in Japan.

The plot is paradigmatic, and may have been intended as an 'origin story' for the TV show – a cynical Bogartian samurai (Tamba Tetsuro) stumbles into a group of starving villagers who have kidnapped the local magistrate's daughter in order to make demands for equity and justice. Mistaken for one of their number by some of the magistrate's infinite henchmen, Tamba's surly badass sides with the villagers, which precipitates a cascade of bloodletting and torture, roping in a lazy vagrant samurai (Nagato Isamu) released from prison to act as an assassin, and a hedonistic samurai



Culture clash:  
'Outcast of the Islands'



## NEW RELEASES

◀ (Hira Mikijiro) 'sponging' off the magistrate but eventually put in a position where he has to defend the villagers and the two samurai who have recklessly chosen to fight for them.

Brisk, complexly plotted (in a Fordian way – up to eight distinct perspectives are explored throughout the warfare) and visually eloquent, Gosha's film is such a western it's surprising that it's never been remade. Like all good westerns and all good pulp in general, the film's thematic core is indelible. Power and class equal life-or-death struggle, as the magistrate even hires mercenaries to kill his other mercenaries, and the bitter ending helplessly leaves power to its own devices and surmises that no amount of bloodshed will change things. As indeed it hasn't.

**Discs:** The digital restoration, particularly on Blu-ray, is spectacular, but otherwise there's an uncharacteristic deficit of extras, relying only on Bilge Ebiri's sensible essay to add value. A glimpse of the TV series would've been fascinating. (MA)

## Zift

Javor Gardev; Bulgaria 2008; Eureka/Region 2 DVD; Certificate 15; 94 minutes; Aspect Ratio 2.35:1 anamorphic; Features: trailers, stills gallery

**Film:** After two decades in prison, shaven-headed Moth is released and immediately rounded up by his former partner-in-crime (now a petty communist functionary) and aggressively interrogated as to the whereabouts of the black diamond they once tried to steal. So far so (very) derivative, and the introduction of an archetypal femme fatale makes the film's generic roots even more obvious (Quentin Tarantino, Guy Ritchie and the writers of *D.O.A.* are owed a hefty debt too), but first-timer Javor Gardev's restless direction, glistening monochrome Scope cinematography and a voiceover narration that sprinkles almost every scene with vivid tactile and olfactory detail turns this Bulgarian thriller into an unexpectedly sparky pleasure. Much of it is in howling bad taste, with copious flatulence and excrement ('zift' has multiple meanings, 'shit' being one), gleefully gratuitous nudity of both sexes, and an increasingly outré running gag involving a runaway glass eye. But it's all staged with such dementedly Kusturican vim that even a concept as metaphorically hackneyed as interrupting a sex scene with a praying mantis devouring her mate becomes an authentic showstopper.

**Disc:** The DVD transfer is excellent; the subtitles are uncomfortably small. (MB)

This month's DVD releases reviewed by Geoff Andrew, Sergio Angelini, Michael Atkinson, Michael Brooke, Kim Newman, Vic Pratt, Kate Stables and David Thompson

## TELEVISION

## NCIS – Season 8

Belisarius Productions/CBS; US 2010-11; Paramount Home Entertainment/Region 1; 1,031 minutes; Aspect Ratio 16:9; Features: audio commentaries, featurettes, interviews

**Programme:** Based around the activities of the real-life Naval Criminal Investigative Service, *NCIS* is utterly preposterous, completely implausible and all the better for it. It's a caffeine-fuelled genre cocktail combining espionage, cyber crime, forensic investigation and grand romantic adventures in the style of Dumas, in which our heroes solve impossible crimes and intricate whodunnits to defeat foes threatening the homeland from within and without. The police-procedural trappings are mere window dressing for a Romantic adventure show that smartly eschews any inherent jingoism by making all its main characters outsiders whose primary allegiance is not to country and core but to each other. Mark Harmon is the maverick team leader permanently at odds with his superiors, while his three main agents – ex-cop and movie buff DiNozzo, ex-Mossad assassin Ziva (played respectively by the absurdly good-looking Michael Weatherly and Cote de Pablo) and computer geek McGee (Sean Murray) – are all recruits from outside the service, with the CIA usually perceived as their real enemy.

Popular right from its inception, this is a show that remarkably continues to expand on its audience base, turning it into the *Only Fools and Horses* of US crime drama. After wrapping up the drugs-cartel cliffhanger from the previous season, the most enjoyable stories here focus on flashbacks to the early lives of regulars past and present (the most poignant revolves around a character killed at the end of season two), the return of Robert Wagner as DiNozzo's roguish father and a blockbusting five-part season finale that pulls the team apart and then draws them back together again.

**Disc:** The soft, gauzy look of the show is ably replicated, as is the punch of the 5.1 surround. The various cast and crew commentaries are mildly entertaining, though a segment featuring gushing from the fans is a tad embarrassing. (SA)

## North Square

Company Pictures/Channel 4; UK 2000; Acorn Media/Region 2; 488 minutes; Aspect Ratio 14:9; Features: picture gallery, text biographies

**Programme:** Phil Davis as Peter McLeish, the charismatic and conniving chief clerk at a Leeds barristers' chambers, bestrides Peter Moffat's glossy legal drama like a Machiavellian colossus, smiting opponents and bestowing patronage on those who pay fealty to truculent fashion. Quoting Blake's 'Jerusalem'



## Who Pays the Ferryman? Classical allusions are sprinkled as so much confetti throughout this unconvincing serial set in the Aegean Islands

and singing 'Danny Boy' to keep his high-flying young crew in check, he regularly mops the floor with the ostensible stars of the show, even pummeling the magnificent Helen McCrory as the ultra-ambitious lawyer who won't let loyalty to her barrister husband, or giving birth, get in the way of a successful court appearance. Rupert Penry-Jones is the conflicted lead who cheats on his wife but is honest with his clients (even helping a gay footballer out of the closet while on the stand), essentially playing the same role he would later reprise in Moffat's more recent legal soap, *Silk*.

**Discs:** The impressive anamorphic transfer is in the correct 14:9 ratio and is sharp and colourful throughout. Extras are negligible. (SA)

## Who Pays the Ferryman?

BBC Birmingham/The Greek Film Centre/BBC2; UK 1977; Eureka/Region 2; 393 minutes; Certificate 12; Aspect Ratio 4:3

**Programme:** Classical allusions are sprinkled as so much confetti throughout this serial (the title refers to the fee offered to Charon to travel across the Styx to Hades), one of several dramas by Michael J. Bird set in the Aegean Islands. Alan Haldane (a laconic, world-weary Jack Hedley) is the old soldier who, like Ulysses, returns to Greece to find the beloved he left behind and instead discovers a hotbed of conspiracy. Having fought with the islands' partisans during World War II, the widowed Haldane makes a pilgrimage to Crete to discover that Melina, the woman he loved and

whom he believed had rejected him, was pregnant with his child – but was prevented from marrying Haldane by her xenophobic mother Katerina (Patience Collier, in barnstorming form). He finds a daughter and a grandson he didn't know existed and then falls in love with businesswoman Annika (Betty Arvaniti), who is actually Melina's sister.

Despite being shot partly on location, *Ferryman* ultimately fails to convince. It's hamstrung not only by some poor studio interiors (shot back in Birmingham) but also by its subservience to its theme of the past bearing down on the present with tragic results. Every episode focuses on the disillusionment of expats (played by, among others, Patrick Magee) whose attempts to escape from past misdeeds are usually thwarted. Bird laudably strives to provide a nexus between the ancient world and the new landscape shaped by Thomas Cook package holidays, but usually comes a cropper. Much of the drama is simplistic in the extreme (villains and henchmen always dress in black) and the cliché-ridden dialogue lurches from one cringe-worthy homily to another. Stefan Gryff in particular, as the friendly local police chief, gets more than his fair share of risible dialogue, providing such crushingly banal asides as: "We can never shake ourselves free of what once was, for the past runs with us like our shadow."

**Discs:** Image quality can be variable, though three episodes made predominantly on film, including the two-part finale, clearly offer the best visual presentation. (SA)



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# Smoke without fire

Edward Buscombe finds the career of Thomas Ince more absorbing than his once scandalous demise

## Thomas Ince: Hollywood's Independent Pioneer

By Brian Taves, University Press of Kentucky, 367pp, £34.50, ISBN 9780813134222

Film producers don't always feature large in the history books; Thomas Ince is famous mainly for two reasons. The first is that a whiff of scandal still hangs around the story of his early death in 1924 at the age of 44. By that time a hugely successful and well-regarded independent producer, he had spent the weekend before his death aboard a yacht belonging to William Randolph Hearst, the newspaper magnate whose girlfriend Marion Davies was an established film star. The two men had been discussing a possible merger of their movie interests.

In his biography Brian Taves suggests that Hearst's enemies – of whom there were many – were responsible for the spread of malicious rumours about what happened on board (rumours subsequently dramatised in Peter Bogdanovich's 2001 film 'The Cat's Meow'). One was that Hearst had in fact shot Ince, either because he discovered him in flagrante with Davies, or because he mistook Ince for Charlie Chaplin, who was also on the yacht and whom Hearst believed was seducing Davies. It's a pity to spoil a good story, but Taves convincingly establishes that Ince was alive when he left the yacht and in fact died of a heart attack at his home. (He had a history of heart disease.)

Ince's other, less scandalous claim to fame is his contribution to the development of the studio system. He believed that the production of films could be put on a properly industrial basis, and his contribution to systematisation was two-fold. First, scripts were meticulously prepared in advance, with everything mapped out down to the smallest detail, leaving nothing to chance. Second, Ince showed that the process of filmmaking could be broken down into a series of specialised functions. As Brian Taves puts it, "Ince was taking a cue from modern industry and the assembly line, doing for motion pictures what Henry Ford had done for automobiles."

Early filmmakers had been jacks of all trades. Under Ince's system the different tasks were separated out, and facilities were constructed for the various specialised functions. Ince's studio in Santa Ynez Canyon – popularly known as Inceville – had its own powerhouse and reservoir, an arsenal for weapons and explosives, as well as props stores, dressing rooms, stables and corrals.



Independent innovator: Thomas Ince laid the groundwork for the studio system

Standing sets included a Dutch village, a Spanish mission and an Egyptian bazaar.

Those with an interest in the early western will also know of Ince as the producer of films notable for their realism and the flair of their mise en scène. 'Last of the Line' (1914) is a good example. Recently released in a restored version by the National Film Preservation Foundation, the film makes good use of the troupe of Oglala Lakota recruited by Ince from the Pine Ridge Indian reservation in South Dakota. Ince was also the producer of a successful series of westerns starring William S. Hart, helping the star expand his films from two-reel shorts to five-reel features; 'The Bargain' (1914), in which Hart developed his screen persona of the 'good-bad man', was the actor's first big box-office hit.

According to Taves, Ince's later preferred genre was the melodrama or

**Ince believed that film production could be put on a properly industrial basis**

women's film. But beyond providing numerous plot synopses of half-forgotten films (only one third of Ince's features survive), Taves is less interested in the nature of his subject's cinematic achievement than in what his career reveals of the early film industry, and in particular of the struggles between the monopolistic tendencies of the major studios and a few individuals trying to maintain their independence. The book provides exhaustive details of Ince's business affairs, but tantalisingly few glimpses into the creative mind of this talented and hyperactive individual.

Had he lived longer, would Ince have forged for himself a permanent position as an independent producer in the manner of David O. Selznick or Samuel Goldwyn? He fought hard to avoid being swallowed up by Triangle and First National, companies he was obliged to cooperate with in order to gain distribution for his films. But the system he helped devise inevitably favoured those with the large resources needed to buttress failure with success; the independent is potentially always just one film away from disaster.

## Noriko Smiling

By Adam Mars-Jones, Notting Hill Editions, 239pp, £12, ISBN 9781907903458

Made on the cusp of an uncertain new decade in US-occupied Japan, *Late Spring* (1949) has been the go-to film for writers trying to make sense of Ozu Yasujiro's 'mature style' for a Western audience. In *Noriko Smiling* the British novelist and one-time *Independent* film critic Adam Mars-Jones accuses Anglo-American scholars of bleeding meaning from the film – which follows single Noriko, wheedled into marriage by family and friends – through their reluctance to question what is behind its heroine's enigmatic smile.

The famous vase shot, which has so "mesmerised" Paul Schrader and Donald Richie, is a case in point. In Mars-Jones's view, they would do better to pay closer attention to the interplay between the characters, which throws into relief Ozu's deliberate dissonances of plot: the beach trip falsely set up as a love scene; the appearance of two servants (in a household that has previously done without them); and Professor Somiya's unquestioning acceptance of his daughter's moodiness.

Mars-Jones wants to understand why Ozu disorients his audience – a question he believes has been ignored owing to Western nervousness about penetrating Japanese cultural norms. The answer, he thinks, lies with monumental changes in Japan triggered by its military defeat in 1945. *Late Spring* undoubtedly is a family drama, but its departures from realism create a world in which characters proceed uncertainly.

Even if he had wanted to, censorship would have prevented Ozu from explicitly linking the Occupation to cultural shifts, but to ignore historical context entirely prevents a more perceptive reading of the film; Mars-Jones's argument with the Ozu experts is founded on this alleged lacuna. "We accept the idea of [Ozu's] sublime indirectness, as long as he's not saying anything," he writes. "There couldn't be a more patronising way of acknowledging greatness." Although it sometimes simplifies critical positions and steers clear of current scholarship, *Noriko Smiling* is a bold – if brash – new take on a film endlessly discussed.

✦ Sonia Mullett



Behind the smile: 'Late Spring'



## Hollywood Madonna: Loretta Young

By Bernard F. Dick, University Press of Mississippi, 304pp, £36.95, ISBN 9781617030796

What is a "Hollywood Madonna", exactly? The two words seem antithetical, which is partly why screen actress Loretta Young got into so much trouble off screen.

Blessed with an ideal face for the camera (wide-spaced, semi-startled eyes, lush mouth and blindingly white teeth), Young was an undoubted, flexible, competent star for close to 30 years, first as teenaged ingénues, then as full-fledged leading ladies, then on the anthology TV show that extended her fame and cemented her image of virtuous glamour. She could play vampires and she could play spinsters, working girls and wives, screwball heiresses and girls so downtrodden that they might think of suicide – as in her best movie, Frank Borzage's *Man's Castle* (1933).

A staunch Catholic, Young was a romantic who admitted in interviews that she fell a little bit in love with all her leading men. She entered into a tortured love affair with married Catholic Spencer Tracy when they made *Man's Castle*, and this led only to pain and guilt for both of them. In 1935 Young went on location with Clark Gable for William Wellman's adventure film *The Call of the Wild*. After the shoot, Young found herself pregnant with Gable's child. An abortion was out of the question for her, but an illegitimate child at that time would have ended her career, so Young went away for a year, had her baby, carefully planted some stories about wanting to adopt children, then adopted her own daughter.

She was clever about this subterfuge,



Hushed up: in 1936 Young was back at work only weeks after secretly giving birth

adopting another child along with her daughter and then sending the other child back, which she hoped would make for maximum distraction. What she didn't count on (and this is where the story has its unavoidable comic side) was that her daughter Judy inherited Gable's Dumbo ears. Young tried everything to hide these ears – even surgery – but the truth had to come out at some point. Finally, Judy asked her mother if the rumours were true, and Young admitted it. "You are a walking mortal sin," she told her daughter.

All of this is covered in *Uncommon*

*Knowledge*, Judy Lewis's 1994 book about her mother, and it gets another going over in Bernard F. Dick's new biography of Young. Anyone who has read any of Dick's other star bios (he's also done Rosalind Russell and Claudette Colbert) will know what to expect: plot summaries of films, unfocused prose filled with arbitrary literary references, and lots and lots of padding. There's actually a whole chapter here on Young's radio work, and there are so many typos and mistakes in the text that I stopped counting them (on page 171 alone, there are three

screwed-up italics for three separate titles). Dick does draw attention to the neglected *Life Begins* (1932), a gritty hospital drama with a fine performance from Young, but anyone interested in the actress's offscreen life of religion and deception should certainly skip this ill-considered, shoddy book and go straight to her daughter's memoir.

To be fair to Young, in the early 1930s she gave a few performances that were more than competent, in *Life Begins* and *Man's Castle*, but also as a lovelorn good sport in Frank Capra's *Platinum Blonde* (1931), as an orphan trapped in the *Zoo in Budapest* (1933), and as the bad girl *Midnight Mary* (1933), for Wellman. After that, though, came yards of roles like the yards of taffeta for her all-important costumes, an unexpected and undeserved Oscar for doing a Swedish accent in *The Farmer's Daughter* (1947), and her hilarious entrances for her anthology TV show, where she did a full 180-degree turn after closing a door so that we could see the back as well as the front of her gown.

She was as beautiful to the end of her life as she was evasive, winning an Emmy for a sentimental TV comeback film, *Christmas Eve* (1986), then refusing to speak publicly about her daughter's book. At a certain point, Young cared more about looking the part than acting the part – and more about her religion than anything else. But in *Man's Castle* the romanticism that caused her so many problems in life found its purest outlet. For that film alone she deserves her place in the Hollywood pantheon – not as a madonna, but as a real, horny, intense girl transfigured by her own love for Tracy, and by Borzage's swooning camera. ♦♦ Dan Callahan

## Luck and Circumstance: A Coming of Age in Hollywood, New York, and Points Beyond

By Michael Lindsay-Hogg, Alfred A. Knopf, 274pp, £17.99, ISBN 9780307594686

You want luck and circumstance? Try this: as an adolescent in the 1990s, around the same time I was first discovering Orson Welles, I happened to see a very charming, very witty comedy starring John Malkovich, called *The Object of Beauty* (1991). It's the only feature film written by its director, Michael Lindsay-Hogg, a prolific veteran of British television (*Brideshead Revisited*, 1981) and music documentaries (*Let It Be*, 1970).

Lindsay-Hogg (whose mother was actress Geraldine Fitzgerald) was long said to be the only son of Orson Welles. In his remarkable new memoir, he confirms the rumour, and while it would be a fool's errand to look for signs of Welles in *The Object of Beauty*, I take pleasure in having accidentally paired that slight

film with *Citizen Kane*. Real life, however, wasn't the stuff of double bills. Fitzgerald made mostly ambiguous references to Welles's paternity – such as the fact that her husband, Edward Lindsay-Hogg, was surprised by the news that she was pregnant. ("You were an accident," Michael was told.) For his part, Welles was hard to read, sometimes friendly but



A voyage round my father: Orson Welles

usually chilly in their sporadic encounters – and each time fatter than before. Seeing Welles in a restaurant in the 1960s, Lindsay-Hogg tells him that he is working in Irish television. Welles replies dryly, "Still in Ireland, huh?"

On the other hand, at their first meeting (when Lindsay-Hogg was 15 and his mother was acting in *King Lear* for Welles), the director was practically paternal. Lindsay-Hogg remembers Welles approaching him from behind and "then, as if to clarify his presence, he laid his right hand on my shoulder and squeezed it, kneading it twice." He recalls the moment with appropriate grandiosity: "I felt, if it had been my bare shoulder, I wouldn't have ever washed his touch off."

Peter Bogdanovich once wrote that Welles told him he wished he had a son "because he was 'hopeless with women'". But he *did* have a son – what a curious pose it was to deny it. In a 1982 BBC interview, Welles bemoaned "the modern world", which included, as he put it, "sons being ungrateful to their fathers". And what of fathers being unkind to their sons?

Lindsay-Hogg writes entertainingly about other figures who came into his orbit, from Henry Miller to William Randolph Hearst. This is the best book about show business since Brooke Hayward's *Haywire*, another memoir by the progeny of a *grande dame*. It's the kind of book where the author writes, almost nonchalantly, of attending a party at the Manhattan home of Sidney Lumet and Gloria Vanderbilt and being asked by Tammy Grimes, "Is it true that Orson Welles is your father?" (As it happens, in the closing pages it's Vanderbilt who gives the final, concrete word on Lindsay-Hogg's parentage, in several quoted letters.)

Lindsay-Hogg moves freely from story to story, aware that "it is memory I'm dealing with, and that's the way it works, as when looking in the dictionary, one word will lead to another, by proximity or by reference: oligarch, oleaginous, unctuous." In the end, all of his words lead to his mother, whom he adored. Readers may conclude that, with a mother like Geraldine Fitzgerald, the author didn't need Orson Welles at all. ♦♦ Peter Tonguetto



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## 'Culture' wars

Having recently read *British Film Culture in the 1970s*, edited by Sue Harper and Justin Smith, I came upon the review of the book by Henry K. Miller (S&S, March). I read his remorselessly negative analysis with mounting incredulity, as it bore no relation to the book I had just finished reading. Far from being "drawn largely from secondary sources", it is firmly rooted in a wide range of primary sources. Far from "the general quality of argument and expression [being] low", it is carefully argued, eminently readable and thoroughly perceptive in its judgements. It adds measurably to our understanding of what has been an "under-researched decade". The review has all the hallmarks of an attempt by an ambitious young pretender to gain a reputation by savaging with unrelenting ferocity the work of established scholars. It is a not unfamiliar syndrome in the world of criticism.

**Jeffrey Richards**  
Lancaster University

I'm writing to protest at the grossly misleading and uninformed review of *British Film Culture in the 1970s* (S&S, March). That study is the most important outcome of a major three-year research project that also generated a website, two PhDs and a conference – all of which, like the book itself, significantly advanced our understanding of a confusing, complex decade of British cinema that had previously been devalued or slighted. The reviewer casually dismisses this wide-ranging scholarship with the phrase "drawn largely from secondary sources", which even the most cursory glance would show is inaccurate and derogatory. *British Film Culture in the 1970s* makes extensive use of archives, the trade press, personal papers, interviews (several conducted for the project itself), government documents and newspaper sources in its attempt to map a divergent and decentred film culture.

The reviewer claims that film culture

## LETTER OF THE MONTH

### Vanished lady

It's the awards season again and, like Christmas, it seems to get longer every year. You would think therefore that with the amount of time and effort BAFTA spends on its Film Awards, someone might take a little care when choosing those represented in its obituary compilation. I needn't give more than an abbreviated list of credits – *The Lady Vanishes, One of Our Aircraft Is Missing, The Silver Fleet, Dead of Night, Pink String and Sealing Wax, It Always Rains on Sunday, Night and the City, White Corridors* – to illustrate the significance of Googie Withers (right) in British cinema. Yet at its ceremony on 12 February, BAFTA ignored her passing – oddly enough in a year that saw Best Picture awarded to a film that reveres and celebrates cinema's heritage.



At best this oversight shows negligence and discourtesy, at worst a shameful ignorance of film history. I wonder if the Academy will make

amends – and whether BAFTA will find another way to show some respect.  
**Tyrone Gaminski**  
London

is "scarcely touched on" until the last chapter, and yet the problems and complexities of that term are absolutely at the heart of this book, which has chapters on government policy, censorship, film education, film design, black British culture, the relationships between film and the visual arts, independent/avant-garde cinema, the television and music industries, production conglomerates, producers and directors, audiences and reception, as well as visual and thematic analyses of a broad range of films.

Miller's review is distorted (and offensive) in several other ways, but rather than labour that point one must question how and why it has appeared in a leading film magazine that represents the British Film Institute. No doubt the author was encouraged by *Sight and Sound's* impressionistic, partial and personalised style of reviewing, in which the object of attention is often sacrificed to the display of the reviewer's own preferences, but surely there should be some measure of editorial control if the review is as poor as this? *British Film Culture in the 1970s* is an important study, an exceptionally wide-ranging and ambitious cultural history which redefines our understanding of British cinema. It deserves far better attention.

**Andrew Spicer**  
University of the West of England, Bristol

### Henry K. Miller replies:

No doubt Dr Spicer, though professionally associated with the book's editors on a directly related project, writes with perfect impartiality. Having taken more than a cursory glance at its pages, however, I cannot accept his claim that the "problems and complexities" of film culture are adequately addressed, still less put at the book's heart.

Some contributors are less reliant on secondary sources than others – my review contains due caveats – but primary sources, where used, are

too often mishandled in any case. Discussing *Scum* (1979), for example, the editors write that the film's "bleakness and radicalism came from" producer Don Boyd, discounting his own testimony and, absurdly, omitting to mention its provenance as a television play in which Boyd was not involved.

British cinema of the 1970s is indeed deserving of scholarship, but even under a more appropriate title, this dispiritingly parochial collection – which dismisses John Boorman's American films as "slick enough" (impressionistic enough?) before describing *Zardoz* (1973), shot in Ireland on a Hollywood budget, as "British-made" – would not pass muster.

### Divine love

Jonathan Romney, a writer I much admire, not least for his review of *Hadewijch* (S&S, March), asserts that it would take a much longer analysis by a critic who was also a theologian to get to grips fully with this film. Yes indeed. In the meantime, may I tentatively suggest that the spiritual theology of Hadewijch, the 13th-century Christian mystic whose name Céline is known by at the convent, implicitly runs through the whole movie.

Hadewijch's understanding of humility (in contrast to Céline's confusing it with humiliation) speaks of a true selfhood emerging when we justly take pride in being made in God's image. Céline's spiritual journey spends much of its time along the path of overzealous behaviour. Excessive abstinence, perceived by her superiors as an impious self-love, leads to her being sent back to the world where there will be "more opportunities to show her love of God". The upshot is that in the spirit of her medieval namesake, Céline accepts that God is made known in proactive love.

Ultimately Céline bemoans the price Love appears to demand of her, but we can interpret this as a false kind of pride – unlike that of the original Hadewijch. It prevents Céline, according to the mystic's outlook, from realising that God's

presence is already there, as it is within the whole created order. At the end we're left pondering if she will ever equate that stranger's rescue with the kind of apprehension by Love that Hadewijch makes reference to. Whether that Love is of divine or earthly origin is up to the viewer to decide.

**Revd Stephen Brown**  
Tockwith, York

### Director's cut

In his piece about David Cronenberg's *Videodrome* (S&S, March), Brad Stevens seemed to suggest that as Universal's new Blu-ray release is still the R-rated cut, the full version has never been released in the UK. In fact the director's original unrated cut was released here on laserdisc back in 1999. The subsequent DVD release in 2002 was – like the laserdisc – a letterboxed version, but for some reason Universal reverted back to using the R-rated version. This same print – as Mr Stevens points out – was also the basis for the recent UK Blu-ray, despite the fact that the full version has been readily available in the US for almost 30 years.

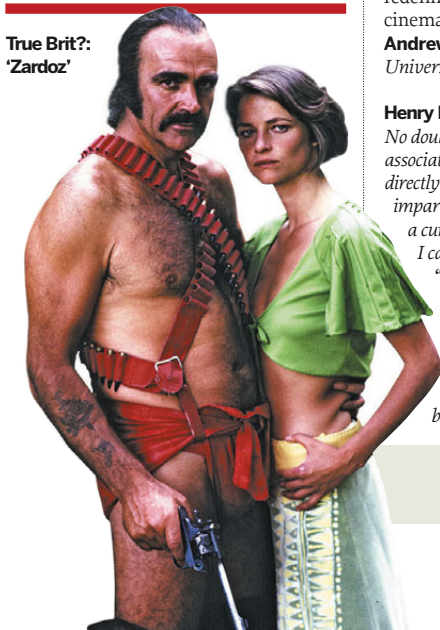
Apart from this small oversight, it was an excellent article with some interesting new perspectives on a classic film.

**Daniel Stillings**  
Sheffield

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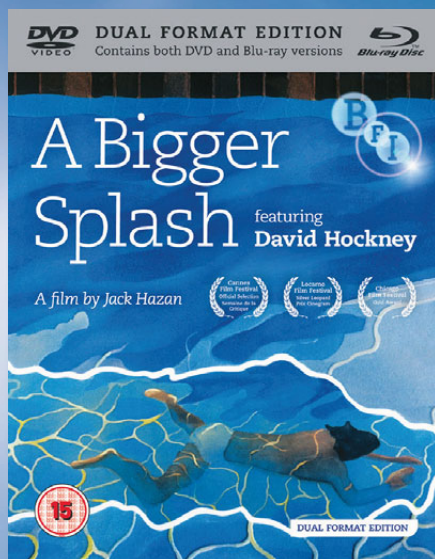
**March** p.58 *Bel Ami*, Cert 15, 102m 30s, 9,225 ft +0 frames; p.68 *The Grey*, Cert 15, 117m 0s, 10,530 ft +0 frames; p.69 *Hadewijch*, Cert 12A, 105m 28s, 9,492 ft +0 frames; p.70 *Hunky Dory* Cert 15, 109m 43s, 9874 ft + 8 frames; p.70 *If I Were You*, nationality is actually USA/ United Kingdom; p.78 *The Woman in Black*, Cert 12A, 94m 47s, 8,530 ft +8 frames  
**February** p.71 *Like Crazy*, USA 2011, (c)Like Crazy, LLC; p.73 *Margin Call*, Cert 15, 106m 26s, 9,579 ft +0 frames; p.75 *The Nine Muses*, Cert PG, 96m 14s, 8,660 ft +9 frames; p.76 *Patience (After Sebald)*, in the company credits "The Re-Enchantment" should read "The Re-Enchantment"; p.76 *Red Light Revolution*, Not submitted for theatrical classification, Video cert 15, 87m 25s; p.78 *The Sitter*, Composer is Jeff McIlwain

True Brit?:  
'Zardoz'





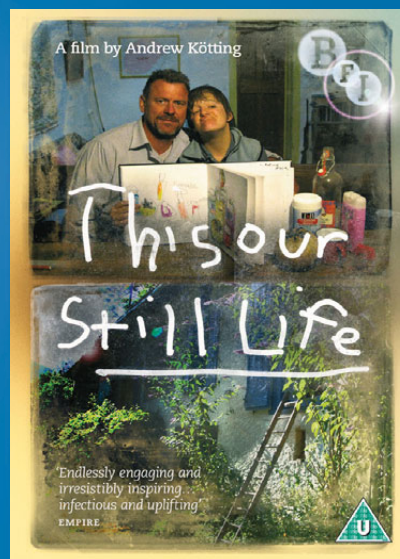
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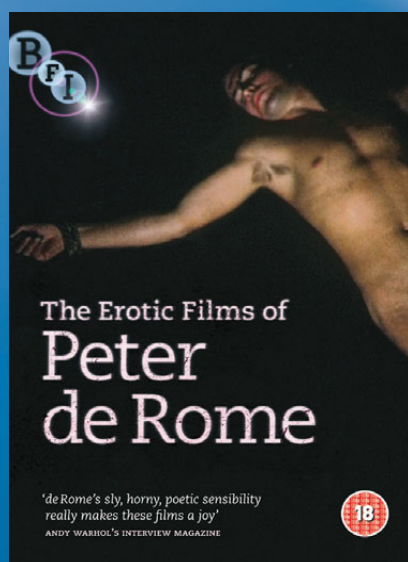
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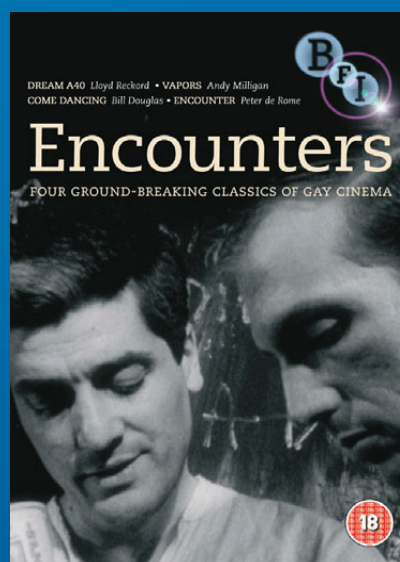
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